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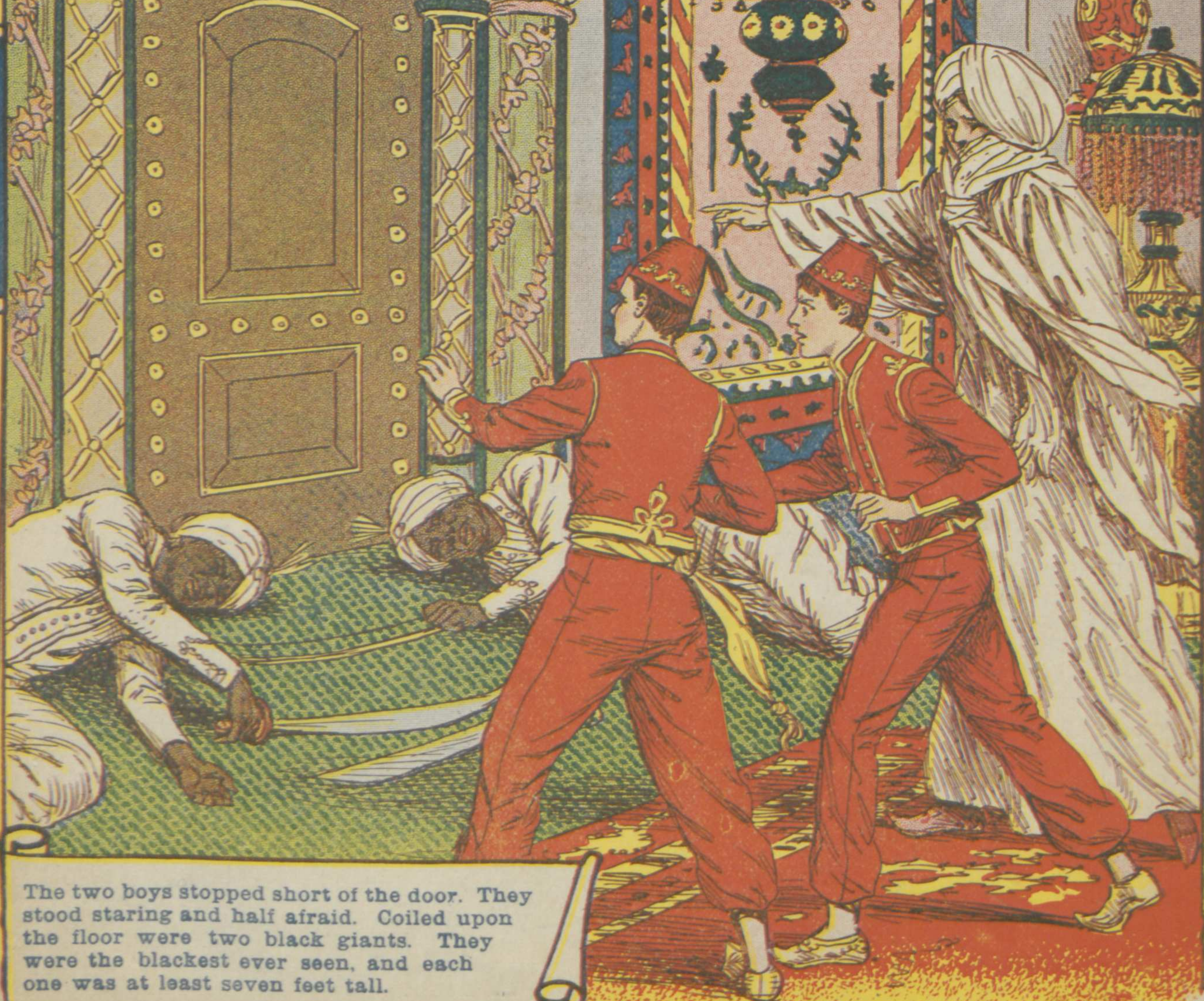
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PLUCK AND LUCK

SOLD TO THE SULTAN

OF THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF THE YANKEE AND OTHER STORIES IDDIES

By Capt. The



The two boys stopped short of the door. They stood staring and half afraid. Coiled upon the floor were two black giants. They were the blackest ever seen, and each one was at least seven feet tall.

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PLUCK AND LUCK

Stories of Adventure

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No. 838.

NEW YORK, JUNE 24, 1914.

Price 5 Cents.

Sold to the Sultan

—OR—

The Strange Adventures of Two Yankee Middies

By CAPT. THOS. H. WILSON

CHAPTER I.

AN ADVENTURE IN CONSTANTINOPLE.

Constantinople is certainly one of the dirtiest cities in the world, and it is for foreigners also one of the most dangerous, being badly policed, even so far as the natives are concerned, and that by a set of men who from their earliest infancy are taught to regard a "Christian dog" as a person to be bled to his last pasa.

Thus many crimes are permitted to go unpunished in Constantinople, and if the crime happens to be against a Christian little or no attention is paid to it.

These few remarks lead up to our story, which begins on a certain rainy night in the month of May when two young American middies belonging to the U. S. battleship *Saratoga*, then lying in the harbor of Constantinople, came down upon the mole, or boat landing, shortly after midnight, and stood in the rain looking off at the lights of the great white steamer which was their home.

And how it did rain, to be sure!

It came down in torrents—in tubfuls!

The storm had broken all at once, but when it got started it did seem as if it would never stop.

Matt Carpenter and Jack Sheldon, the middies in question, had their umbrellas, but these offered scarcely any protection, and it is therefore no wonder that they began to grow impatient when half an hour passed and still no sign of the boat which was to take them off to the battleship.

"Will she never come? Will she never come?" groaned Matt. "By thunder, Jack, I believe all the tailors this side of New York won't be able to press out these breeches again."

Jack laughed and looked down at his own unmentionables, which clung to his legs in the most uncomfortable style.

"It's my opinion, Matt, that she has already come, as Ted Tuffer would say," he replied. "We were here ten minutes late, and the boat was down to leave at midnight. I told you how it would be when you would insist on listening to that Bohemian girl's last song."

"Ah, the little beauty! How could a fellow tear himself away," replied Matt. "Her real name is Christine Ajarian that English gentleman next to me said."

"I saw you talking to him, but I didn't hear. Did he tell you anything more about her, Matt?"

"Now, that's what he did. He said that he had tried to make her acquaintance and had failed. He said that she was as good as she was beautiful, and was the only support of her poor blind mother who lived in some street, the name of which I forget."

"Great Scott! Why, you have got the whole history down fine. Well, I own she is a little beauty and sang divinely, but a fellow don't want to get stuck on every pretty face he sees if he expects to rise in Uncle Sam's navy. But to return to the boat, I think we shall have to give up and try and find a room at some hotel."

"Yes, and find ourselves in the soup in the morning," replied Matt. "No, thank you! Do I have to tell you that Commander Brace is not the kind of a man to forgive a fellow for overstaying his shore leave? I rather think not. You haven't forgotten that little escapade of yours at Gibraltar, I suppose?"

"Come, now, Matt. What's the use of going into ancient history?"

"And what's the use of suggesting something which is cock sure to make trouble?"

"Who wants to make trouble?"

"I didn't say that you did, but there is going to be trouble if we are not on hand at roll call to-morrow morning, that's one thing sure."

Still the rain came pelting down, and still the boys watched and waited.

They had done a foolish thing in so extending their shore leave as to take any risk, but the night attractions of Constantinople had proved just a little too much for them, and they had forgotten the flight of time, so here they were on the mole waiting for the boat which did not come.

One o'clock came, though.

The Turkish policeman on the beat looked at them suspiciously twice as he passed, and as he was now approaching a third time the boys felt that something had to be done.

"Say, Jack," said Matt, "we shall have to hire a boat, that's all."

"Easier said than done. I haven't got a cent left."

"I have enough money to cover the expense, but where will we get it?"

"The money? I thought you said you had it?"

"Pshaw! You know what I mean. The boat."

"Ask the policeman. If you don't, I think he is booked to ask us why we are standing here."

"Am I a Turkey? I can't talk his lingo."

"I can talk to any man living," laughed Jack. "You leave that to me."

And as the policeman came sauntering up, looking rather forlorn in the rain, Jack stepped up to him and pointing to the battleship, whose lights shone brightly through the mists, roared:

"Say, no boat! Want to hire one! Tell us where!" at the same time making motions as though he were rowing a boat, and pointing to his own uniform and Matt's.

The policeman seemed to be a very decent sort of a fellow for a Turk.

He laughed, pointed to his ears and shook his head.

"That's right," said Matt. "What do you want to roar so for? The man isn't necessarily deaf just because he can't speak United States."

"'Merican?" said the policeman. "Yes?"

"You speak American?" cried Jack. "Good! Tell me where we can get a boat."

"Boat?" said the policeman. "Yes; come!"

Evidently the policeman's United States vocabulary was

very limited, but still he knew enough to convey his meaning to the boys, and they followed him along the mole to a narrow alley, which led down to a rickety wharf.

"Boat!" he said, pointing, and then made signs to indicate that they must knock hard upon a door, and turning away, continued on his beat with a few of Matt's pasas in his pocket, well satisfied that he had done the boys a good turn.

But had he?

That remains to be seen.

It cannot be supposed that the policeman had anything to do with what followed, but certain it is that by directing Matt Carpenter and Jack Sheldon down that alley he had started them on a train of adventures which were of a most serious nature, as will presently be seen.

Little imagining that trouble was in store for them, the two Yankee middies continued on through the alley in the pelting rain.

CHAPTER II.

AT THE CAFE ON THE WHARF.

"This is a tough-looking neighborhood, Matt. By gracious! I don't like the look of this place for a cent."

Jack was getting a bit nervous.

Both sides of the alley were lined with low brick buildings all falling to ruins. In spite of the lateness of the hour, lights burned behind the ground floor windows of many of them, and through the open doors strains of music could be heard, and wild-looking men, most of them Moors or negroes, were passing in and out, almost all very drunk, and not a few inclined to crowd against the boys as they passed.

A man wearing a turban came reeling out of one of the dens. He spit in Matt's face as he passed and muttered some savage threat in his own language. There would have been trouble if Jack had not caught hold of his friend and hurried him on.

"It's a sailors' quarter," he whispered, "and that's the same wherever you go. Don't say a word. It can't be far to the boats now."

It was, in fact, only a few yards to the end of the alley, and here they came to a flight of rickety stairs leading down to an old frame building standing partly upon a wharf and partly on land.

Tied to the piles under the wharf were several rowboats. It was evidently the place they sought.

"This is the shop," said Matt. "Who shall do the talking, Jack, you or I?"

"You had better," replied Jack. "You have got the money, and after all, that's all the talk that's needed."

Matt doubled up his fist and hammered on the door, feeling less hesitation in so doing from the fact that a light burned in the grimy window alongside.

There was not an instant's delay in opening the door.

It flew open like lightning, just as though they had been expected, and a hideous old man, wearing a red fez and baggy Turkish trousers, threw back the door, thrusting a lantern in the faces of the boys.

"Ha!" he exclaimed in a tone of surprise.

Then he shook his head and motioned with his hands for them to go away and was about to shut the door.

But Matt was too quick for him, and he thrust out his feet, preventing the closing of the door.

"We want a boat!" he exclaimed. "We want to go to the American ship. See, I can pay."

He pulled out a handful of pasas and shook them under the nose of the old man, who eyed them greedily, and then pointing to the distant lights of the battleship and making signs of rowing, Matt succeeded at last in making him understand.

The old man did not seem to be altogether unwilling to let his boat, but he made signs to show that he must row himself.

"All right," said Matt. "That goes. You shall row, uncle. He made signs, and the old man seemed to understand, but now he raised another difficulty.

Drawing the boys inside and carefully closing the door, he let them into a dirty little room where there were several tables set with dishes. The place was evidently a cafe of the meaner sort.

There was an American clock ticking away on the mantelpiece. It showed a quarter past one.

Stepping up to it, the old man pointed to the figure II and then to himself and made signs of rowing the boat again.

"You can't go before two o'clock?" asked Matt. "Is that what you mean?"

The old man nodded vigorously.

"All right," said Matt. "I suppose it's the tide. Cafe? Give us cafe!"

"No, no, no! No cafe!" cried the man, and he threw open a smaller room, where there was a table alongside a window which looked out upon the water.

"Wait!" he then said. "Cafe! Yes." And then he lit a lamp and put it on the table and passed over a box of cigars.

"He means wait till he makes the coffee," said Jack. "All right. I'm agreeable. I'd rather sit in this little box than in that dirty place outside."

Matt made no objection, and the boys sat down at the table, the old Turk immediately closing the door and leaving them to themselves.

"This is a queer den, Jack," observed Matt. "I'll bet you it's a rough place. Lucky we have got it to ourselves."

"That's right. Better than being out in the rain, though. Even if we have to sit here all night, it won't be so bad."

"What do you suggest anything like that for? The old fellow's pointing to the clock made it plain enough that he would take us off to the Saratoga at two o'clock. Confound these matches! They won't one of them light. I must ask the old Turk for some."

It was his own matches Jack was growling about, not the Turk's, for the man in the fez had neglected to provide lights for his cigars.

Jack got up and seized the door-knob, expecting to go right out, but found himself brought up with a round turn.

The door had been securely fastened on the outside.

"Thunder!" gasped Matt. "I wonder what that means?"

"Nothing good, and don't you forget it," said Jack, looking very much concerned. "Say, Matt, do you realize that this room is located right over the wharf?"

"Well?"

"Well, suppose the floor is nothing but a trap door and the trap door should happen to drop? Elegant place for doing up a couple of Christian dogs! What do you say?"

"Yes, but why? What have we done? What crime is there in trying to hire a boat?"

"Give it up. Why does he lock us in? That's what we want to know."

"Kick the door down. If you don't, I will."

"Hold on! Something is going to happen! We are not the only ones in this den! By Jove! I wish I had that policeman! Wouldn't I like to pound his head against the wall?"

The case had assumed rather a serious aspect. To be locked in was bad enough, but now strange sounds were heard in the room outside.

There was a shuffle of many feet, and all at once a woman's piercing scream rang out.

"It's a girl!" gasped Jack.

"Yes, and by Jove! I believe they are doing her up!" echoed Matt, when suddenly the cry came again.

This time it was an appeal in a language which the two Yankee middies could understand—an appeal which, coming from a woman, no true American can ever resist.

"Help! Help! Oh, save me!"

Those were the words.

They were enough for Jack Sheldon and Matt Carpenter.

With one accord the two Yankee middies threw themselves against the door and burst it from its hinges, springing into the room outside.

This is what they saw:

Three Turks, wearing the fez and the baggy trousers of their race, one guarding the outer door, two trying to subdue a beautiful young girl, who screamed and struggled in their grasp, while the old keeper of the cafe came rushing toward the middies, motioning them to get back into the room.

Matt caught up a chair and made a rush for the two Turks, while Jack crowded the old cafe keeper against the wall.

"Save me, gentlemen! Save me!" screamed the prisoner appealingly. "They will sell me to the Sultan! Help, or I am lost!"

CHAPTER III.

IN THE NAME OF THE SULTAN.

It was an appeal which no honorable man could resist, much less a Yankee middle, who is supposed to be gallantry itself.

"Unhand that girl!" cried Matt, bringing the chair down over the head of one of the two men.

The blow did the business in great shape, and the Turk went sprawling upon the floor.

Meanwhile, Jack had tripped up the old cafe keeper and floored him, too, and now jumped to help his friend.

But Matt needed no help.

The same chair which knocked down one of the Turks fixed the other, while the third, seeing how the case stood, opened the door and bounced out, leaving Matt to catch the fainting girl in his arms just in time to prevent her from joining the Turks on the floor.

"Thunder! she's fainted, or something!" gasped Matt. "Hey, Jack, lock that door! There may be others of the gang coming. Here, you old rascal! Get some water or some wine or something or other to bring this girl to!"

The old cafe keeper scrambled to his feet, boiling with rage. He might have been a Turk, or an Armenian, or a Frenchman, or an Italian, for all the boys could tell, but one thing is certain; he suddenly developed an acquaintance with the English language which had not displayed itself before.

"Fools! Fools!" he hissed. "Vat would you do? Ze girls sold to ze Sultan. To interfere ees death. Death to you! Death to me! Death to all! Ah, bah! Vy you not stay in de room and mind your own peeze till dis ees over, den I take you to your sheep?"

"You'll take us to our ship now, or I'll break your head!" cried Matt. "Get me some water, quick! This girl goes with us. What do I care for your Sultan? I'm an American. We stand no nonsense like this!"

"American, huh! Yangee!" growled the old Turk. "No good! No fight Yangee!"

"By thunder, we'll show you whether the Yankees can fight or not!" cried Jack. "Grab him by the heels, Matt! Stand him on his head!"

This was an old hazing trick of the middies.

Before the old cafe keeper had time to find out where he was at, he was upside down, with the pasas all tumbling out of his pocket. Meanwhile, the pretty Armenian girl lay in a dead faint, while the two Turks were still unconscious on the floor.

"Will you take us out to the ship?" cried Matt, kicking the Turk on the place where his baggy green trousers had been patched with red.

The Turk roared "bloody murder!"

"Will you, Turkey?" cried Jack, exercising his foot, too.

"Oh, yes! Oh, yes! Oh, yes!" roared the cafe keeper. "Ze blood! Eet is all in my head, boys! Oh, let me down!"

With a sudden whirl the boys stood the Turk on his feet again, giving him one for good measure.

"The boat, quick!" cried Matt. "Get at it now!"

"This way, my lord," said the Turk in his broken English, and then he added, pointing to the two men on the floor:

"You tell zat I geef de boat den I die. My head eet come off—so!"

He drew his forefinger across his throat, and raising a trap door in the floor, pointed to a ladder leading down under the wharf.

"You first, uncle," said Matt, pushing him toward the opening.

"We take her aboard the Saratoga, Jack?" he added. "You agree with me? We can't leave the girl to be sold as a slave!"

"I think not," said Jack. "The fellows will guyus awfully, though."

"I suppose they will, but we can stand it, if the old man can stand for what we have done."

Now, the old man was Commander Brace of the Saratoga, as stern an officer as there was in the navy, but a great ladies' man.

"I guess he will," replied Matt. "Anyhow, I'm going to take my chances. Why don't she come to, I wonder? It can't be that she is dead?"

"She is coming to now, I think," replied Jack, as the girl opened her eyes and stared at them.

The boys were at her side in a moment.

"Get up, miss. We will save you if we can," said Matt. "Don't try to talk now. There isn't a second to lose!"

The girl obeyed.

She looked terribly frightened, and clung tight to Matt as they descended the ladder underneath the wharf.

The old cafe keeper was ready with the boat.

"You will bring it back?" he asked in his broken way. "I am a poor man. You will not steal my boat?"

"You shall get it back," said Matt. "Why don't you row us out, then you can bring it back yourself."

"No, no, no!" was the reply, and the old man retreated up the ladder and closed the trap-door.

"Where are you taking me?" asked the girl, speaking English almost without an accent.

"To the United States battleship," replied Matt. "You will be safe there."

"Ah, yes. If I can be safe anywhere it should be under the Stars and Stripes," replied the girl, stepping into the boat.

She did not speak again until they had pushed off and came out from under the wharf.

"I saw you in the concert hall to-night?" she said to Matt.

"You did," was the reply. "I was charmed with your singing, Miss Ajarian, I believe that is your name?"

"It is—Christine Ajarian," was the answer; "but this is no time to pay me compliments. Listen! I am an American. When I was a little girl I was taken in charge by an Armenian missionary and lived with his family, where I learned English. That was at Trebizonde, on the Black Sea. Later the missionary returned to the United States, and I lived again with my parents. My father removed to Constantinople on account of my mother's eyes, for she was becoming blind and he hoped that the foreign doctors could save her sight. He died three years ago, and my mother has lost her sight entirely. I am her only support. Ah, gentlemen, it is a misfortune to have a good voice and a pretty face in this country. On my way home from the concert hall to-night I was seized by those dreadful men and dragged into that dreadful place. I know only too well what it means. I, who am a Christian, have been sold to the Sultan by the rascal who conducts the music hall. It is a fate worse than death. I shall be locked up in the Imperial harem and forced to sing to the wives there. There will be no escape—never, so long as I live. My poor mother! She will die! Oh, it is dreadful! But for you I should be on my way to the water gate of the palace now, and even as it is I fear we are not safe."

"Why, this is an outrage!" cried Matt. "Such a thing should not be allowed."

"Not be allowed! Who is to stop them?" exclaimed Christine. "What rights have we Americans among the Turks? They have murdered my people by thousands and thousands, and our women are now slaves in this and other cities. No, sir, there is no redress, especially in a case like this. If I have been sold to the Sultan, and I am sure of it, my fate is sealed. I shall never, so long as I live, set foot outside of the place again."

"You will never get into the palace while I live," said Matt, pulling vigorously at the oar.

They were coming now to a long wharf which projected out into the harbor.

So thickly packed in were the fishing boats and other small craft that it was not possible to strike right out for the battleship until he end of this wharf was passed.

"Look out!" said Jack in a low voice. "We want to keep in the open as much as we can. Don't pull in too near to that wharf, Matt."

"Can't help it," replied Matt. "We can't pull in between that bunch of boats there. It's only a minute now and we will be able to strike right out for the ship."

Christine said nothing then. Her face was deathly pale and she seemed very nervous.

"I don't know what I shall do," she remarked after a moment. "I can never go back into Constantinople again. My poor mother will starve. It is terrible! Oh, if I could only get my mother to America. I have some money, enough almost to pay the passage, and—ah, heaven! It is too late!"

Two longboats suddenly shot out from behind the wharf.

They were filled with men all wearing the fez, and at the stern of each boat floated the crescent flag!

Pulled by powerful arms, the two boats shot in front of the little skiff which the boys were pulling, and there stopped directly in their path.

Instantly a dozen rifles went up and were leveled at the boat.

"In the name of the Sultan!" a voice called out in English. "In the name of the Sultan we command you to halt!"

CHAPTER IV.

PRISONERS.

It was a bad box in which our two Yankee middies found themselves now.

The Turk who had been allowed to escape through the door had evidently done his work.

Doubtless these were the boats which were to come up to the float under the cafe and receive the Sultan's victims.

All the Turk had to do was to hurry off to the wharf and give them the word, and this was the result.

"I am lost!" gasped Christine. "It is useless, boys. You

cannot save me. Make no resistance or you will be seized and thrown into prison yourselves."

"They would never dare!" said Matt. "We are American citizens, junior officers in the United States Navy. Why, the Saratoga would shell the city if such a thing was attempted."

But this was only Matt's bluff talk.

In his heart he knew that nothing of the kind would ever be done. They had interfered with the officers of the Sultan in a matter which really did not concern them. It would be ridiculous for Commander Brace to make it an international affair.

Jack was more practical.

"Do we fight or do we give up?" he asked.

"Fight to the last gasp!" replied Matt.

"No; not for me," said Christine, with more calmness than she had yet shown. "It will be no use. You cannot save me. I'm lost!"

"Never!" cried Matt. "I mean what I say. I will fight to the last gasp."

While they were talking the two boats had moved in nearer and the rifles still covered them.

"You want to leave us alone!" roared Matt. "We are United States naval officers! We will make it hot for you if you interfere with us."

It was all folly, and Matt should have known it; but the boy had an ugly temper when aroused.

If he had been armed there is no doubt that he would have fired at the Turks. As it was, he struck at them with the oar when they came alongside and reached over to seize Christine.

Jack, not wanting to be left behind, did the same, and the Turks, instead of shooting, clubbed their rifles and struck back.

A brief fight followed, which had for its end just what might have been expected.

Christine was pulled over into one of the boats, and the boat in which the boys were was overturned.

Two wet Yankee middies struggling in the water had no show.

The boys could swim, but they did not get a chance to show much of their powers in that line, for strong hands seized them and they were dragged into the other boat, their own skiff being allowed to go adrift.

The boys were tumbled unceremoniously into the bottom of the boat, and two of the Turks drawing revolvers, kept them covered.

The English-speaking officer was in their boat. He was a tall, grave-looking man, with a heavy beard, and he eyed the boys with some pity. Not until the boat had been shooting rapidly through the water for some minutes did he speak.

"Young men," he said then, "I presume you are aware that in interfering with the business of his Imperial Majesty, the Sublime Porte, whom you call the Sultan, you have committed a very serious crime. I am sorry for you. I wish it was not so."

"We are Americans. We do not acknowledge the Sultan as our master," replied Matt boldly. "I don't know who you are, but I advise you to be careful what you do."

"Your answer is not only unnecessary, but impertinent," replied the officer. "You do not seem to be aware of the very dangerous position in which you stand."

"I am not standing, I am lying down," returned Jack. "If I was on my feet I'd blame soon make somebody sick."

"You are angry, and you are only a boy," replied the officer, with the same unruffled calmness. "You are also a Christian, a dog, a thing for a true believer to spit upon, but I am a father. Perhaps you have one. I am sorry for you. Were it not so I should simply have you shot and tumbled overboard to feed the sharks. Do not speak to me again. I now address myself to your friend who at least has the good sense to hold his tongue."

It was a stinging rebuke, but the officer did not raise his voice in the least as he administered it.

"Do keep quiet, Matt," Jack whispered. "It can't do us any good to sass the man."

"I'll show him," muttered Matt. "My turn will come later on. Just you wait and see."

"Young man," continued the officer, addressing Jack, "listen to me. I am the only person in this boat who can speak or understand English, consequently whatever you say is for my ears alone. Who are you? To what ship do you belong?"

"We are midshipmen in the American Navy," replied Jack. "My name is Jack Sheldon. My friend is Matthew Carpenter. We belong on board the battleship Saratoga which lies out there."

"Then, in the name of Allah, why did you not stay on the battleship Saratoga?" replied the officer. "You are in serious trouble. You have assaulted the Sultan's officers in the discharge of their duty. You may fear the worst. Remember, young men often disappear in Constantinople. Who knows of your capture? No one who will tell your superior officers. They will inquire for you in vain. I do not wish to alarm you. I am only telling you the truth, that you may prepare for the worst."

"Thank you, sir," replied Jack. "You are very kind. Perhaps you will go a step further and tell us what we had better do."

"I cannot," was the reply. "I am not in command here. Who or what I am does not concern you to know, but I can offer no advice except to be very silent and cautious. You are from what part of the United States?"

"From New York, sir, both of us."

"Ah! New York. I once lived there. It is many years ago. Sometimes I wish I was there now, but I am talking too much. They are watching me. I will try to help you, boys, but I have little hope of being able to save you from your fate."

This was the last that was said.

Jack's heart sank. Matt had relapsed into silence. The situation seemed gloomy to the last degree.

Meanwhile, the other boat containing Christine had shot far ahead of them.

The rain had now ceased, but the night was so dark that it was almost impossible to make out where they were going.

The boys knew but little of Constantinople, for this was only their second shore leave.

The boat now entered a narrow canal which led in between two stone walls.

This, if they had but known it, was the entrance to the famous water gate of the Imperial palace, which, be it understood, is not one building, but many, covering a great deal of ground, and all enclosed within a high wall.

To attempt to pass over this wall without permission, or to enter by any of the gates, meant simply death.

Soon the boat came to the end of the canal.

There was a large gate here made of heavy wooden bars, and above it rose the wall of a high building.

The Turk in the bow of the boat gave a sharp whistle, and the gate was raised.

Immediately the boat shot on into total darkness.

Some one called out something in Turkish and the gate dropped again and a great clanking of chains was heard.

Then the rowers pulled on through the darkness.

"This is our finish," groaned Jack. "Say, Matt, we are in a terrible fix. They'll chop off our heads sure."

"Shut up!" replied Matt. "I may talk too much with my mouth, but I don't give up till I have to. What's worrying me is that poor girl."

"Ah, yes," breathed Jack. "Sold to the Sultan! What a dreadful fate."

Dreadful, indeed, if it was as Christine put it.

Matt's heart sank as he thought of the unfortunate girl, and he resolved to keep up the fight to save her to the last gasp.

CHAPTER V.

MULEY THE DWARF.

For a few moments the boat continued to shoot on through the darkness, and then after a further clanking of chains was heard another gate shot up in front of them, and they passed on into a sort of pool in front of a large building with balconies and many windows.

All was still here, and the place would have been dark but for a swinging lamp which hung in front of a Moorish doorway.

Here was a flight on stone steps, at the top of which stood two huge black slaves, both nearly seven feet tall, and each holding a drawn sword in his hand.

They were silent, and stood so absolutely motionless that the boys were more than half inclined to think they were merely statues, but when the Turks landed on the steps the two blacks crossed swords in front of them for a moment until a password was given, after which they resumed their former positions, and the men were allowed to pass.

Matt and Jack were now ordered to rise, the Turks communicating with them by signs.

The officer who had conversed with them in English had gone into the building ahead of the others.

Three men with rifles walked ahead of the boys as they ascended the steps, and three more came behind.

Such a thing as escape was not to be thought of.

As he went up the steps Jack ventured to look around, catching a glimpse of many large buildings beyond the pool, and catching also a sharp blow across the side of the head with a rifle barrel, which was clearly intended to make him understand that all he had to do was to walk on and pay no attention to what he saw.

They entered a long corridor paved with stone, and after passing along this for a considerable distance, came to a sort of office, where they stopped.

An old Turk wearing a huge turban was asleep inside behind a grated window.

One of the men thrust his rifle between the bars and struck the old fellow under the chin, when he started up with a savage imprecation, which was changed to a yell of terror when he saw the gun.

There was some talk in Turkish then.

The old fellow behind the grating put on a pair of horn spectacles, and looking at the boys sharply, wrote something in a book, after which they were taken into another room, where they were ordered by signs to strip off their clothing.

Matt protested, sputtering away in English, just as though the Turks could understand.

The matter was very speedily settled, though, for one of the men whistled, and immediately four black slaves, naked to the waist, appeared and, seizing the boys, stripped every rag off of their bodies.

The old man then came in through a side door, looked them over carefully, and wrote down some further characters which looked like fly-tracks in his book, after which the boys were given each a breech-clout, much like a pair of bathing tights, which they were ordered to put on, and were then led through a door and down a long flight of stone steps, through a long, damp corridor, down another flight of steps, through still another corridor, where the walls were all green with mold, their conductor pausing at last before a grated iron door.

This he opened and pushed the boys into a cell where there was scarcely room enough to turn around.

This ended the adventures of that night, for their conductor disappeared, and hours elapsed before the boys saw a soul or heard a sound.

It was a terrible situation. After the Turk disappeared with his lantern the place was in absolute darkness and fearfully hot, which last was evidently the reason why their clothes had been removed.

There was nothing in the shape of furniture in their cell, and they were obliged either to stand up or to lie down upon the stone floor.

Hours and hours passed this way. Several days dragged wearily by, and still there was no change, and during all that time our two Yankee middles saw no one but an old Turk who brought them food and water. The latter was always warm and smelled horribly; as for the food, it was not fit for a dog to eat.

The Turk who waited upon them was apparently dumb, at least he never spoke, and when addressed only shook his head and pointed to his ears.

So the situation stood with the boys on the day the Saratoga was booked to sail for Alexandria, and it is hardly necessary to say that they were reduced to a condition bordering on despair.

"This is our finish," groaned Matt. "We shall never escape; I'm sure of that. Oh, Jack, I wish I had spoken to that man fair."

"I don't think it would have made any difference," replied Jack. "I spoke to him fair enough. He told me that he could not do anything for us. You heard him, Matt. I guess he spoke the truth. I don't believe he can."

It was pitch dark while the boys were talking; they could not tell whether it was night or day, having now lost all run of time, and, indeed, they thought they had been there a great deal longer than was actually the case.

Matt was lying stretched upon the stone floor, but Jack was standing up holding on to the iron bars which formed the door of his cell.

Every now and then he would give them a shake. This had got to be a regular trick of his; it seemed to relieve him, but it made no difference how hard he shook the bars, for they never budged.

While the boys were thus talking a light suddenly appeared at the end of the corridor.

This was unusual, for it was less than half an hour since the old Turk had left them, and they knew perfectly well that under the ordinary routine several hours must elapse before he came around again.

"Some one is coming," breathed Jack.

Matt started to his feet.

"Who in the world can it be?" he exclaimed.

"Hush! Keep quiet, and let's watch!" said Jack. "Something tells me that there is going to be a change."

"Great Scott! I hope so!" said Matt. "Anything for a change. I shall go mad if this state of affairs keeps up much longer, that's just as true as I am standing here."

"Will you keep quiet?" breathed Jack. "It isn't the old Turk's footstep. Some one else is coming at last. Who can it be?"

Suddenly they heard a voice singing, and to their intense surprise the words were English. It was a queer old love song. The voice was high pitched, and very distinct. It sounded like a woman's voice, and so the boys concluded it was, until presently a light flashed along the corridor and they saw an ugly, misshapen black dwarf, with his great head all on one side, shuffling along through the corridor singing as he came.

In one hand he held a lantern, and in the other a small bag which he swung back and forth as he came along.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he suddenly exclaimed, continuing the tune and making it all sound like a part of the song.

"When they watch they see Muley; when they listen they hear him sing. Count one thousand, and then the watchers eat, and that's the time to work on the third stone from the iron door. Ha, ha, ha! Don't forget to drop it when you are through!"

He never stopped, but as he passed the cell he leered in at the boys with rather a friendly expression on his ugly face, and putting out his hand shot the bolt which held the door in place, at the same time dropping the bag in front of it.

Then, still singing, he went shuffling on, and the light gradually disappeared at the end of the corridor, and the boys were left in darkness again.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RAISING OF THE STONE.

"Say, Matt, what do you think of all that?" breathed Jack, when at last the singing died away.

"By gracious! That's meant for us!" answered Walt.

"Sure!"

"Somebody has taken pity on us."

"Evidently."

"The door is open."

"Who's counting? Are you?" asked Jack, who was trying to count himself.

The boys remained silent for some minutes then.

"One thousand," said Jack at last.

"Nine hundred and forty," said Matt. "Nine hundred and forty-one, nine hundred and forty-two, nine hundred and forty-three—"

"You began too late!" broke in Jack. "The time has come to act."

"That dwarf was sent to us for a purpose, and I propose to do just as he said."

"But the stone? How can we find it in the dark?"

"Easy enough. Leave that to me. This must be the iron door. Of course we know nothing of any other. It is open. I'm going right out now!"

Jack spoke in whispers. He had felt from the first that they were being constantly spied upon, for he had seen flashes of light in the wall from time to time, which he felt sure came from some peep-hole.

There were none now, however.

The blackness of the corridor seemed unbroken as Jack pushed open the door, dropped upon his hands and knees on the damp floor and began feeling of the stones.

They were comparatively small, perfectly flat, and laid in regular order.

There was no difficulty in locating the third from the door.

Jack stopped when he got to it and opened the bag which he had picked up when he first came out of the cell.

There were tools in the bag.

One was a cold chisel, another a mason's hammer with a broad, thin blade at one end, and there was also a thick iron wedge.

Jack's heart beat fast as he whispered this information to Matt.

There could be no doubt that some one was trying to help them escape.

"We are expected to raise this stone," breathed Jack. "That's what I'm going to work at now."

"What shall I do?" asked Matt.

"Keep quiet."

"But I want to do something."

"Take this wedge, then, and put it under the stone when I get it up."

Jack now went to work on the cracks around the stone.

If the stone was indeed movable it evidently had not been disturbed in a long time, for the cracks were filled with dirt. Still it was soft, and did not seem to be mortar.

Working as noiselessly as possible, Jack was at length able to get the blade of the mason's hammer into one of the cracks, and so get a grip upon the stone.

It resisted his efforts at first, but soon it began to move.

"It's coming," whispered Jack. "Have your wedge ready, Matt. Clap it in under the stone when I get it up."

But he was only able to get it just so far, and then it would slip back again.

Evidently the cold chisel was what was wanted, and Jack, holding the stone up with the hammer, inserted the edge of the chisel, and the stone came up in great shape.

Matt thrust the wedge under it and held the stone in position.

The boys could now get their hands underneath. The stone was pretty heavy, but there was no difficulty at all in raising it up.

"We are right up against it, Matt!" Jack whispered.

"That's what we are. What's to be done next?"

"Get on the other side of this stone, of course."

"Yes; but where is it going to lead us?"

It was impossible to tell.

The boys paused a moment, naturally hesitating to turn over the stone.

"How shall we ever get it back if we do?" said Matt.

"We won't do it," said Jack. "Here, put the whole length of the cold chisel under the thing and hold it up. We can crawl under, then all we have to do is to let it drop."

"It will make a terrible noise."

"I suppose it will if we drop it. We must lower it gently, though."

"That's what; but what is there underneath? We want to find that out first, before we go to dropping the stone."

"Yes; or before we crawl under it. Wait. I'll run my hand down under and see what I can find."

Jack lay down flat and reached in under the stone.

"There's steps here," he reported. "It is all right."

"You are going to try it, then?" asked Matt.

"I certainly am. You go first. I'll drop the stone. My arms are stronger than yours."

At another time Matt might have resented this, for he prided himself upon his strength, but now he said nothing, and just crawled in under the stone.

"Yes; there is a flight of steps here," he reported; "but it is dark still. Why in thunder can't some of our unknown friends show a light."

"Now, don't you go to looking a gift horse in the mouth," replied Jack. "Somebody is trying to help us, that's certain; and I don't care a blame who it is. I'll trust 'em every time."

Thus saying, Jack slid in under the stone, Matt going down a few steps to get out of his way.

"Have you got the bag?" Matt whispered. "It won't do to leave that up there where the old Turk can find it. Some one will be given away then, and I don't think we want to make trouble for our unknown friends."

"We certainly don't," replied Jack; "and I am going to get the bag, just you leave it to me. There! I have it. Now hold out your hand, Matt, and take it from me. So! Now the stone comes down."

Jack did it so quietly that there was scarcely any noise when the stone dropped into place.

"Matt, are you there?" he whispered.

"Right here, Jack."

"Good enough! We have escaped from our dungeon. Question is now what is coming next?"

And it was a grave question. Jack's heart beat rapidly, and Matt was none the less nervous.

It was no joke to stand there on those stone steps in the darkness without having the faintest idea into what new dangers they were going to be led.

But the time had come to act, and without further talk the boys began to descend.

"Go slow, Matt!" whispered Jack. "Feel your way, boy, and don't make any noise on your life."

Matt made no answer. In spite of the fact that the place was suffocatingly hot, a cold perspiration was standing out all over him as he groped his way down.

Jack never said a word.

He was counting the steps, and he had counted sixty-eight when Matt whispered:

"This is the end, Jack. There are no more."

"Thank heaven!" breathed Jack. "Where are we now, I wonder?"

"There's a stone wall here. It seems to be just such a place as we have upstairs. We can go right or left, it don't make much difference which."

"It don't make any at all, I fancy. The right should be right, so let's try the right. Oh, don't I wish we had a light here!"

"No use to wish for what we haven't got. Go on."

Jack was down now, and they walked along side by side over slimy stones for quite a distance, when all at once both were startled by a rush of feet, and the next Jack knew two heavy hands were clapped upon his shoulders and he was violently shaken, while a deep bass voice hissed some words in his ear in an unknown tongue.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MAN WITH THE DAGGER.

Jack was half scared out of his wits.

We mean when the heavy hands came slapping upon his shoulders.

Matt was in the same boat, too.

It was too dark to get the least idea as to whom the hands belonged.

Jack tried an old hazing dodge.

He lowered his head and butted.

At the same time he put out a foot and kicked.

The head came in contact with somebody's stomach.

The foot got between somebody's two legs.

Somebody went down on the floor then.

Jack turned to help Matt, who was fighting and at the same yelling: "Let go! Let go!"

"Shut up!" gasped Jack. "Don't make all that noise!"

He struck out with his right.

There was a sharp cry and a thud.

Somebody got it in the head, and somebody's head went against the wall.

"Come, Matt! Run for your life!" cried Jack, getting hold of his friend's hand.

The two boys went dashing on through the darkness together.

They were brought up with a round turn.

All at once they ran against a stone wall.

It cut off the passage completely.

Panting for breath, the two boys came to a halt.

"By thunder, we are in the soup now!" gasped Matt.

"I expect we are," replied Jack.

"I suppose we ought not to have shown fight."

"I think myself we made a mistake."

"Hark!"

"What now?"

"Do you hear anything?"

"Can't say I do."

"Listen."

"Now I do."

"They are creeping up to us."

"Sure as you live."

"Brace up!"

"That's what I'm trying to do."

"It's awful to stand here in the dark and not know what is going to strike us next."

"You are right it is."

"By Jove! they are almost here. What shall we do?"

The boys clung to each other in the desperation of despair.

Fancy pictured all sorts of horrible happenings to their minds.

Suddenly there was a hissing sound, and a light flashed up.

Two half naked blacks stood grinning at them.

One touched a wax taper to a torch, and the narrow passage was full of light.

The other walked straight up to the boys.

His hands were both held out before him.

He said something which neither Jack nor Matt could understand.

The two were friendly, however.

The grinning face and glittering white teeth had a pleasant look.

Jack felt sure now that no harm was intended, and he also held out his hands.

The friendly black came close up to him, and taking both hands in his, shook them.

Meanwhile, the other pushed in front of Matt up to the wall. He knelt down and fumbled about at the base of the wall close down to the floor.

Here he must have touched some hidden spring.

The wall slid slowly to one side.

The black stepped through and motioned to the boys to follow.

They did so, and as soon as they were through, the black, waving the torch in front of him, ran up a flight of steps of great length.

Jack counted over a hundred before they got to the top.

There was another secret door here.

As it flew open the two blacks stood aside and motioned to the boys to enter.

This they had scarcely done when the door closed behind them and they found themselves alone.

"By Jove! Where are we at now?" gasped Jack, looking around.

They stood in a small room without furniture.

Hanging against the wall were clothes of all kinds.

It looked like a second-hand clothes dealer's shop.

There were Turkish costumes, dress suits, clothes which might have belonged to a mechanic, and clothes for European gentlemen.

The place had a queer, moldy smell.

There was neither window nor door.

It was light enough, though, for a large lamp hung suspended from the ceiling.

"This beats the band," breathed Jack.

"What are we expected to do?" replied Matt. "Dress ourselves, I wonder?"

"Don't know."

"I've a great mind to."

"Better wait."

"Say, Jack, look here."

"Thunder! Our uniforms!"

"That's what."

They were hanging against the wall with the other clothes. On the other side were shirts and underwear.

The boys looked among them, and had no trouble in picking out their own garments.

While they were thus engaged they suddenly heard a curious chuckle behind them.

Looking around they saw the dwarf who had planned their escape sitting cross-legged on the floor.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he chuckled. "So you got here, did you? Hello, you Yankees! How was everything in New York when you left?"

"Do you know New York?" asked Jack.

He scarcely knew what to say.

"I guess I do!" chuckled the dwarf. "Ha, ha, ha! Why not? I was born there."

"You were?"

"Oh, yes. Thompson street near Spring. Wish I was there now."

"Is it long since you left?"

"Years! I came here on a man-o'-war. Went ashore, got drunk, was sold to the Sultan to be a dwarf in the harem, and make fun for the ladies. Ha, ha, ha! It is so long ago that everybody forgets that Muley the dwarf can speak English except— Ah! I must speak no names—except your friend."

"Have we a friend in this place?" asked Jack bitterly.

"You have, and a powerful one. I am acting under his orders now."

"The man who spoke to us in the boat?"

"Never mind. I can't tell."

"You speak very good English, Muley."

"Oh, yes. I learned all that in the ward-room of the old Wachusett. I used to wait on the mess. They were very good to me. Talk about escape! Wouldn't I like to escape? But it's too late now! Ho, ho, ho!"

"What are we to do?" asked Matt impatiently. "Why have we been brought here?"

"Don't know," replied Muley. "I act under orders. You are to dress yourself in these clothes, and then follow me."

He sprang up and took from the nails two suits of clothes made in the Turkish style.

Two pairs of baggy green trousers, two embroidered red silk jackets, two fezes, and a complete set of underclothes for each; also fancy embroidered shoes with turned-up toes.

"There!" he exclaimed. "You put those things on and wait for orders. Ha, ha, ha! Oh, what's that over in the corner. Look! Look!"

Instinctively the boys directed their eyes to the corner.

They could see nothing strange.

It instantly dawned upon Jack that this was a ruse.

He wheeled around to look for Muley.

Just as he expected, the dwarf had disappeared.

"Fooled!" cried Matt, looking around too.

"That's what. This is queer business," said Jack.

"You bet it's queer business. What are we to do?"

"Obey orders, I suppose."

"But suppose it gets us into trouble?"

"Say, Matt?"

"Well, Jack, what is it?"

"Can we get into any worse trouble than to be sent back to our dungeon again?"

"No, by thunder!"

"So I think. Here goes!"

Jack slipped off his breech clout and began dressing himself.

Matt followed his example.

Soon they were transformed into two very respectable looking Turks.

"Ha, ha, ha! You do look so funny, Matt!" laughed Jack.

"So do you."

"It's like a masquerade."

"Wonder what's coming next?"

"This," said a deep voice behind them.

The boys wheeled about and saw a tall Turk dressed in black clothes of European cut with a red fez upon his head.

In his hand was a long, glittering dagger, which he held up in the air, at the same time keeping his eyes fixed upon the boys.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TWO DAGGERS.

Jack stood silently looking at the man.

He was entirely at a loss what to say.

What struck him strangely was that these Turks could speak such good English.

He did not know that English is much spoken in the Sultan's palace.

There are scarcely any of the Turkish noblemen who make up the household of the Grand Porte who cannot speak English as well as their native tongue.

The man stood motionless, still holding the dagger.

His deep-set eyes seemed to look the boys through and through.

"How are you, sir?" said Jack, breaking the painful silence at last. "I wish you would tell us what we are expected to do."

"It is what I am here for," replied the man. "You are the midshipmen who tried to interfere to save that American girl whom his Imperial Highness bought?"

"We do not deny it," replied Jack.

"What you say shows your common sense," continued the man. "Tell me no lies. It will not pay."

"I have no disposition to lie to you, sir."

"Stop! The fewer words the better. Answer my questions as I ask them. Remember, you are entirely in my power. Should you make one move or say one word which does not please me, this dagger will descend upon your heart."

"We are not showing fight, sir," said Jack quietly. "We are aware that it would be of no use."

"I think not," replied the man, stamping his foot. "Look up!" he added. "You will see how the case stands."

Jack and Matt raised their eyes toward the ceiling.

To their surprise they saw that it had vanished.

The whole top of the small room—and it was not much larger than a good-sized closet—was now seen to be nothing but a plate of glass.

There were as many as a dozen faces pressed against the glass.

Old faces and young faces, a dozen pairs of glittering black eyes were peering down upon the boys.

"We seem to be on exhibition," said Jack, with a smile.

"You are where we wish you to be," replied the man. "You are here to do what we tell you to do. You will do it or you will die."

Jack grew more and more nervous.

He glanced at Matt and saw that he was scared almost out of his wits.

"Now," said the man, "who are you two?"

"Americans," replied Jack.

"I am aware of that. Naval officers?"

"Midshipmen."

"You belong to the battleship which left the harbor yesterday?"

"Then she has gone?"

"Answer my question."

"Yes; we belong to the Saratoga."

"You desire to rejoin your ship?"

"Naturally."

"You have abandoned all idea of interfering with the Sultan's business?"

"We never had any such idea."

"You certainly did when you assaulted the Sultan's servants in the discharge of their duty."

"We were appealed to for help by a young girl who spoke our language. We are Americans! We cannot refuse such an appeal."

"Ha! Then you still hold to the idea?"

"I cannot say that we do now. Of what use would it be? The girl has passed beyond us. We can no longer hope to save her from her fate."

"What you say is quite true, and yet there is a chance to save the girl."

"I wish you would explain. I cannot understand what you mean."

"The explanation is simple. If you two boys will do as I wish you to do, not only shall you leave the palace within an hour's time, free to go where you will, but the girl shall go with you. This I swear!"

"Oh, we will do it!" said Matt. "We will do anything if you will only promise that."

"Wait," said Jack. "I don't make promises until I know what I am promising."

"You want further explanation?"

"I certainly do."

"Very well. Here is all that concerns you to know. Do as I desire, and I swear by Allah that it shall be with you as I say. Refuse, and it means instant death to you both. Look up once more!"

Jack raised his eyes.

In front of each head an arm and hand were suddenly projected.

In each hand was a dagger.

Each hand was raised and a dozen daggers descended toward the glass.

"I cannot do otherwise than consent," said Jack quietly. "We are entirely in your power. You have made that very plain."

"Exactly," said the man. "Now, follow me."

He pressed a secret spring behind the clothes and a panel flew back, the boys passing through the opening.

They now found themselves in a dimly lighted passage, and after descending a few steps came upon a broad corridor which led them to a door at the end.

This their conductor opened with a key and motioned to the boys to pass through.

The instant they had done so the panel shot back into place and they found themselves alone.

"Hello! Where is he?" breathed Matt.

"He didn't come," replied Jack. "We shall see him soon enough. Don't you fret."

"Say, Jack, there's no flies on this!"

"I should say not! This must be in the guest part of the palace. What can it all mean?"

They were standing in a magnificently furnished chamber of considerable size.

The walls all hung with expensive tapestry, great Persian rugs lay here and there upon the smoothly waxed floor.

As for the rest, it looked like a bric-a-brac shop.

There were divans, chairs of beautiful and expensive patterns, choice pictures adorned the walls; in the midst of the long room a fountain played, the water rising in a mass of spray from a marble basin, while a cluster of colored lamps above it threw down many tinted rays of light, causing the spray to assume rainbow hues which were extremely beautiful.

The boys stared about as they conversed in whispers.

It looked like a scene in some spectacular play. They could only wonder what was coming next.

"It's night, anyhow," breathed Jack at length. "I didn't know whether it was night or day. I'm going to have a look out of that window, Matt."

He walked over to the nearest window and pushed aside the heavy curtains.

There was an extended view of the city and the harbor beyond.

Lights twinkled everywhere, which told Jack that it must still be early in the evening.

The window was high up from the ground.

"I wonder if we are being watched?" whispered Matt, pressing up behind Jack.

"You may depend upon it we are."

"What do you think of it all?"

"Don't ask me. How do I know? I tell you one thing, though, Matt, in spite of my promise I have not the least idea of doing anything unbecoming an officer and a gentleman."

"By Jove! It's hard to say what a fellow would do with death staring him in the face."

"That's right; but hush! There is some one behind us now. Don't turn around. Wait and see what comes."

Footsteps were heard crossing the floor.

They drew nearer and stopped.

The silence was too painful. The boys just had to turn around.

A tall figure muffled in a heavy shawl and wearing an enormous turban stood behind them.

Whether it was a man or a woman the boys were unable to determine, for the face was entirely concealed behind a pink silk scarf which was wound around the head under the eyes.

The figure remained motionless and silent for several minutes, and then from the folds of the shawl the hands came out.

In each hand was a dagger.

The hands were extended forward and the daggers thrust out hilt first toward the boys.

"The time has come, Christians," a deep, sonorous voice said from behind the scarfs. "Take the daggers. Do with them as I direct, and you and the Christian girl are free."

CHAPTER IX.

IS THIS THE HAREM?

Without attempting to reply, the boys accepted the two daggers.

"Follow me," said the masked figure, starting to cross the room.

"It's a man," thought Jack.

Had he spoken his thoughts aloud he might have added:

"And it's the same man!"

The voice was disguised, but he could not forget those glittering eyes.

With soft, cat-like tread the masked figure crossed the room and stood before a door at the further end.

The two boys stopped short of the door.

They stood staring and half afraid.

Coiled upon the floor were two black giants.

They were the blackest men Jack had ever seen, and each one was at least seven feet tall.

Apparently they were asleep.

This seemed fortunate.

Each giant clutched a huge scimitar; the glistening, curved blades were of the finest steel.

"Do not fear," whispered the mask. "They are both asleep, for both have been heavily drugged. Now, listen to me. Behind this door there is another sleeper who has not been drugged. He must never be awakened. He must be found when day breaks with one of those daggers in his throat and the other in his heart. Do your work and retreat noiselessly. You will find me here. As for the rest, it shall be as you have been told."

He drew back and glided behind a curtain, disappearing from view.

"Great Scott! We are up against murder!" breathed Matt.

"Brace up and come on!" whispered Jack.

It was no time to hesitate.

Some move had to be made instantly.

It is scarcely necessary to say, however, that our two Yankee middies were not doing the assassin act.

Nothing could have been further from Jack's thoughts when he pushed against the door.

It yielded to his touch, and moved inward on well oiled hinges.

The boys now found themselves in a large and magnificently furnished sleeping chamber lighted by a crystal globe suspended from the ceiling, in which an electric coil glowed.

Over at one side of the chamber stood a gilded bedstead with elaborate hangings of yellow silk above it, and upon this bed lay a small, effeminate looking man, evidently in a sound sleep.

"Great heavens! What are we to do?" gasped Matt.

It was always hard for Matt to decide.

Jack, however, had already come to a decision.

He turned and shot the bolt on the inside of the door.

"We have headed those outside off for the moment," he whispered. "Matt, do you know what I believe?"

"What?"

"Look at that man."

"Well?"

"Who do you suppose he is?"

"Give it up."

"Compare his face with the picture of the Sultan in the print shops if you can bring them to mind."

"Jack, do you mean to say that's the Sultan?"

"I don't know. I only know that the face looks like his pictures."

"I've heard that they are always plotting to kill him."

"Exactly. We are to be made to do the job."

"And if we did do it, what then?"

"Why, then! Why, these plotters mean to rush in and do us, of course."

"But their promise?"

"What in thunder do they care for their promise? I tell you we wouldn't be allowed to live five minutes. The crowd comes rushing in. We are the murderers. They kill us. Who are we? No one knows."

Matt shuddered.

"We are lost in any case," he breathed.

"We are lost unless that man on the bed can help us. Come on! I'm going to wake him up now."

Jack walked boldly over to the bed and laid his hand upon the sleeper's shoulder.

To say that Jack's heart was in his mouth scarcely describes his feelings.

He expected death, and nothing short of it before he saw the last of the business. Nevertheless he did not hesitate.

"Wake up! Wake up!" he breathed in the sleeper's ear.

The man started up in bed with a sharp cry.

"Hush!" whispered Jack. "If you understand English, listen to me. It is a plot to assassinate you. There are the daggers! We were told to kill you! Do you comprehend?"

The man's eyes were standing out of his head in fright.

Whether he understood or not Jack was not able to determine.

With a wild yell he sprang from the bed and went rushing toward a little door at the other end of the room.

He threw up his naked foot, gave the door a kick and popped through.

They could hear his frantic cries even after he had vanished.

At the same instant some one threw himself against the bolted door.

Wild shouts were heard outside.

What was being said the boys could not tell, for the words were incomprehensible to them.

The bolt held.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Blows were being rained upon the door fast and furious.

"There!" breathed Jack. "You see it is just as I said!"

"You bet it is!"

"We should have had no time to retreat!"

"They never intended that we should retreat."

"That's fit. They would have burst in and killed us if we hadn't bolted the door."

But the danger was not over by any means.

In fact, it seemed to have just begun.

What was to be done?

The door could not long resist the blows which were being rained upon it.

A moment later and it was burst in and a dozen Turks came rushing into the room.

They found it vacant, however.

There was no dead man on the bed, nor were there any assassins to be taken redhanded.

The two Yankee middies had no idea of waiting to be annihilated.

They had disappeared.

It was Jack's quick wit that saved them.

Seeing a third door opening off from the side of the room opposite the windows, he made a rush for it.

Matt followed him closely.

The door was locked, but the key was on the inside.

Jack lost no time in reversing this order of things.

He pushed Matt through the door and locked it on the outside.

The boys now found themselves in a dimly lighted passage.

Their feet sunk into the rich Persian carpet and gave back no sound as they hurried on.

"Was it the Sultan, Jack?" Matt breathed.

"Give it up. I guess so, though."

"Thunder! What shall we do?"

"The best we can."

"We can never escape."

"Then we may be captured. Come on! Come on!"

They were nearing the end of the passage, when a door was suddenly opened and a veiled woman appeared.

She gave a scream and darted back through the door.

"Great Scott! We are in the Sultan's harem!" breathed Jack. "We must get out of this or we are lost!"

CHAPTER X.

THE ESCAPE UP THE LADDER.

"Matt, if we don't get out of this we are as good as dead!" Jack was now thoroughly frightened.

To advance would have been madness, to retreat meant simply death.

Nor could they remain where they were.

Our Yankee middies had read enough about life in Turkey to be perfectly aware that their lives would not be worth a moment's purchase if they were caught.

Jack leaned against the wall in despair.

He could not have done a better thing or picked out a better place.

The wall gave way behind him and he went sprawling on his back.

He sprang to his feet as quick as lightning.

"I'm with you, Matt!" he whispered. "This is just the place."

It was just a closet; there was barely room enough for the two boys to stand together behind the door.

Evidently this was a peep-hole for some of the numerous spies of the palace.

The door swung back noiselessly.

There were two holes bored through it low down toward the floor.

A great uproar was now in progress outside.

The boys had concealed themselves just in time.

Jack dropped on his knees and fixed his eyes to one of the peep-holes.

He saw a dozen or more black eunuchs armed with sharp scimiters come rushing along the corridor.

They were shouting like madmen, and behind them came several old women, unveiled, and with their hair hanging down around their shoulders.

They were screaming at the top of their lungs.

"By gracious, we are in a tight box now!" breathed Jack.

"If they catch us they will chop our heads off sure!" gasped Matt. "Oh, what shall we do?"

Matt solved the problem even as he propounded it.

There was a rope hanging down from above.

Without thinking what he did, Matt pulled it.

A lot of ropes came tumbling down about the boys' heads.

"What on earth is that?" whispered Jack, getting up.

The ropes had struck him on the back.

"Why, it's a rope ladder!" gasped Matt.

"Up, then. Climb up!" whispered Jack.

The din outside was dreadful.

Wherever the rope ladder might lead them, he felt that matters could not be much worse than they were.

Matt caught at the ladder and went scrambling into the darkness.

Testing the ladder by pulling on it and finding that it would probably bear them both, Jack lost no time in following.

It was silence with the boys then. There was noise enough below.

The ladder proved to be a short one.

The next Matt knew his head came in contact with a trap-door.

He pressed hard against it and it flew up.

A blaze of light broke upon the darkness.

Mat climbed on and sprang into a large, magnificently furnished bed chamber, lighted by several electric bulbs.

Here Jack joined him a second later.

The room was unoccupied. There was but one door, and that was locked on the outside.

In the middle of the room was a large oak table with a drop-light and a book turned upside-down.

A big easy chair was drawn up alongside the table.

It looked as if some one had been reading and had hastily left the room, alarmed by the noise below.

"Great Scott! Where have we got to now?" gasped Matt.

"Give it up," replied Jack. "This is somebody's room. We can't get out unless we go back by the way we came."

"That's what! Blest if I know what to do."

They had to decide in a hurry.

Footsteps were now heard in the corridor and a key was hastily thrust into the lock.

"It's no use," breathed Jack. "We are in for it! Here comes more trouble right now."

The door flew open and a tall Turk hurriedly entered the room.

The two Yankee middies stood motionless by the table. Both the boys were deathly pale, and Matt was trembling all over.

Jack gave a slight exclamation as his eyes rested upon the man.

He knew him at once.

It was the English-speaking Turk whom they had talked with in the boat.

The man gave an exclamation in Turkish and whipped out a revolver.

Instantly he lowered it, however, and exclaimed in English:

"Ha! What does this mean! We have met before?"

"We have," replied Jack with all the calmness he could assume. "We met in the boat."

"The two Yankee middies, by the beard of the Prophet!" exclaimed the Turk. "In the name of all that is wonderful, what brought you here?"

Jack thought fast.

Should he tell all? Could he trust the man any more than the others in the palace merely because he happened to understand the English language?

"We came here because we had to," he said.

"I see! You came by the trap-door?"

"Yes."

"You must have been in——"

The man checked himself suddenly.

"It is well that you are here," he said. "Close the trap-door, please. That's right. Now draw up chairs and be seated. You probably have something to tell me. You may as well tell it now."

Meanwhile the greatest excitement seemed to be still in progress below.

Bells were ringing and the shrill screams of women could be heard.

The Turk himself, although he tried to look grave and unconcerned, was as pale as death and evidently terribly agitated.

It seemed to be all he could do to sit still.

"I will tell you first what has happened to us, sir," said Jack, seating himself beside the table.

"I wish you would," was the reply.

"I have nothing to conceal," added Jack. "Somebody has been trying to make tools of us, to make us commit murder, to——"

"Ah, I thought so!" cried the Turk. "You are the two assassins who did not assassinate. Were you other than Americans I should not believe a word you say. I should simply stab you as you sit—or shoot you. Ha!"

"Thank you," replied Jack. "We are Americans. We belong to the United States Navy. What I say to you is the truth."

"Go on," said the Turk, laying the revolver upon the table.

"Go on!"

Jack told the whole story then.

The only thing he concealed was the identity of Muley, the dwarf.

Something occurred to prompt him to do this.

He spoke of Muley as a black man, but did not describe him in any way.

To all this the Turk listened with deep attention.

"It is a plot to assassinate a certain prominent official," he said gravely. "It is a very serious matter."

"I appreciate that now," replied Jack. "We are no murderers. We are only two Yankee middies. We were brought to this palace against our will, and we want to get out of it just as soon as we can."

"Just so," said the Turk. "You may thank your stars if you ever get out."

"What do you mean?" asked Matt; "that they would kill us?"

"Kill you!" said the Turk smiling grimly. "Kill you! Why, young man, how much do you suppose your life would have been worth if you had done just as you were told to do?"

"Not much, I suppose," replied Matt.

"Not much! Nothing at all. Not the snap of my finger! If you had not turned their plans upside-down by acting as you did, you would both be dead now. Ha! What was that?"

A bell rang sharply.

Then suddenly a voice was heard calling:

"Abd-Eremin! Abd-Eremin!"

The voice seemed to come from the other side of the room. "I am called," said the Turk, springing up.

He walked over to a speaking tube near the window and called into it some Turkish words.

There was an answer in the same incomprehensible tongue.

"I must leave you," said the Turk hurriedly.

"Do we stay here till you return?" asked Jack.

"Don't move out of here if you value your lives," was the hurried reply.

The Turk then opened the door of a closet.

It was full of arms.

Guns and rifles hung against the wall on one side, and swords of all sorts and patterns on the other, besides which were revolvers and pistols of every pattern imaginable.

The Turk took up another revolver, and hastily thrusting it into his pocket left the room and locked the door behind him without speaking another word.

"By gracious," gasped Matt, "this is terrible. What is going to be the end of it?"

Jack laughed.

"I'm not worrying," he replied. "We ought to be thankful that we are still alive."

"Hark! What's that?" breathed Matt.

"Some one coming up the rope ladder."

"We want to head him off!"

"Right you are. We must hold down the trap-door."

Jack sprang toward the trap, which had been carefully closed.

Before he could reach it the trap was flung up and a man's head appeared.

It was the face of the sleeper in the room below—a face as white as death.

CHAPTER XI.

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE SULTAN.

"Ha! You!" gasped the man on the ladder.

He drew back with terror written all over his face.

Jack was equal to the situation.

"You need not be afraid of us, sir," he replied. "If you remember what we did for you surely you must know that."

"Remember! Ha! Yes," was the reply. "Can I forget? I owe my life to you. Ha! We will talk of that later. Abd-Eremin—is he here?"

"He has just left us," replied Jack. "He was called. He said he would return in a moment."

"A moment! It may be too late," replied the Turk peevishly. "Why did he not remain?"

He pulled himself up through the trap, and carefully closing it behind him walked over to the table.

He was fully dressed now.

His clothes were of the European cut—just a plain suit of black.

Reaching the table he sank down in Abd-Eremin's chair and buried his face in his hands.

In this position he sat for several minutes.

Then suddenly raising his head he looked at Jack and began to talk.

"Boy, I thank you. You have saved my life," he said.

"I never meant to take it," replied Jack quietly.

"Ha! No! Who told you to take it?"

"I cannot tell you, sir."

"Cannot! Will not, do you mean? Do you know who I am? When I give an order I expect—I command—that it shall be obeyed."

"I do not know who you are," replied Jack, "but I suspect."

"Ha! What is your suspicion?"

"That you are the Sultan of Turkey, sir. At the same time I want you to understand that I am a junior officer in the United States Navy, and that in my way I am just as proud of my position as you are of yours."

It was a bold speech.

For the life of him Jack could scarcely tell why he made it. But what was said could not be unsaid.

The Yankee middy folded his arms and looked at the Turk with unflinching gaze.

"Boy, you are bold!" was the reply. "Of course you must realize that I hold your life in my hands."

"I held yours in mine not long ago, sir."

"It is true, and you spared me. I shall never forget it. Your name?"

"Jack Sheldon."

"Your friend's name?"

"Matt Carpenter."

"You are——"

"Pardon me, sir. We have introduced ourselves, and before we go any further we would like to know who you are."

"I am the Sultan."

"I thought so."

"Do not question me further. Time presses. I want to know more about you."

"I will tell you anything you want to know, Your Highness," said Jack respectfully, "but I may ask the privilege of putting a few questions to you before we get through."

"How came you in my palace?" continued the Sultan, ignoring this last remark.

"We were captured by some of your people and brought here."

"Indeed! And why?"

"Because we undertook to defend a young American girl who had been sold to Your Highness. A singer in one of the concert halls."

"I know nothing of the matter. Doubtless it was some business of the chief of my eunuchs. I cannot interest myself with the petty details of my harem. That is not to be expected. Did you kill any of my people, young man?"

"We knocked them down in a low cafe by the water side. I cannot believe they were seriously hurt."

"And this girl?"

"She was taken from us and brought to the palace."

"And you were made prisoners?"

"Yes."

"What happened then?"

Jack told the story.

The Sultan did not interrupt until he came to the point where the daggers were given them by the masked figure."

"So!" he exclaimed. "Be good enough to particularly describe this man."

"I cannot. His face was masked; he was wrapped in a shawl. I can give you no idea how he looked."

"Yet you feel sure that it was the same man who talked with you in the clothes closet?"

"Yes."

"Describe him again."

Jack did so.

"It is enough," said the Sultan. "I know now who is at the bottom of this dastardly plot, but of course I do not know how many of my people are in it. The plan was to make it appear that I was assassinated by Christians who had penetrated the palace in disguise. Boy, to what ship do you belong?"

"To the United States battleship Saratoga, sir."

"She has now left Constantinople. I see the full working of the plot. It is enough. Now, you had some request to make of me?"

"I have, Your Highness. I demand that we be set free!"

"Demand!"

"Yes. We are Americans."

"Well!"

"We have nothing to do with this business."

"So far as my power goes you shall be set free," replied the Sultan, "but you must perceive that just at present I have no power to do anything of the kind. What else?"

"I request that the American girl, Christine Ajarian, also be set free," replied Jack.

He spoke in the same determined manner.

He felt that he was getting along well and that this was too good a chance to be missed.

"Ha! This time you do not demand; you request," replied the Sultan, with a smile. "Well, boy, this I promise. So far as lies in my power your request shall be granted. Understand, there are several hundred women in my harem. I do not even know them all by sight. Of this girl I know absolutely nothing."

"Yet she was sold to you, sir," broke in Matt.

"It happens every day. Can I keep informed of all that my subordinates do?" said the Sultan with a frown.

Then he added:

"You have my promise. Once I am out of the palace I shall retire to one of my country seats. There I shall be safe and will be able to bring these rascally plotters to speedy justice, if indeed they do not commit suicide. When I am free to act this American girl shall be released. This I promise you in return for what you have done for me."

"I thank Your Highness," replied Jack, wisely determining to let the matter rest at this.

"I will do more for you!" exclaimed the Sultan, rising and beginning to pace the floor nervously. "There will be a reward in money I—— Ha! What is this? By Allah, they are bold!

They have tracked me here! Boys, you will help me? You will fight for me? We must retreat by the ladder. If worse comes to worst—oh! They are here!"

Confused sounds were heard outside the door.

Suddenly heavy blows were struck upon it.

Then a voice shouted something which the boys could not understand.

"I am lost!" gasped the Sultan, turning as pale as death.

He sprang to the trap-door.

Bending down he clutched an iron ring and tried to raise it.

"By Allah, they have fastened the door on the under side!" he groaned.

"They will break in!"

"Boys, stand by me! It is fight or die!"

At the same instant there came a furious hammering upon the door.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ATTACK IN THE ROOM.

The Sultan was a coward.

Jack and Matt saw that at a glance.

He was no more capable of undertaking his own defence than he was of flying.

In fact, he just stood there by the table trembling from head to foot.

"Is there no way out of this room, sir?" asked Jack, hurriedly, as the pounding on the door still kept up.

"None that I know of," was the reply.

"Abd-Eremin—he is your friend?"

"My friend! Oh, yes! Did you not hear him call the warning to me! He has been captured. Probably they have killed him now."

Jack wasted no more time in talk.

That was not at all his style.

The pounding on the door kept right up.

The blows were falling fast and furious.

Of course it was only the question of a moment when the door must yield.

Jack flew to the other door and threw it open.

"Revolvers are what we want, Matt!" he exclaimed.

But right here Jack struck a snag.

The revolvers were not loaded.

No cartridges to be discovered.

The Sultan upon being questioned knew nothing about them.

"We shall have to fight with swords!" cried Jack.

He seized a fine old Damascus blade and handed another one to Matt.

"Do you fight, too, Your Highness?" he exclaimed.

"I cannot," replied the Sultan cringing. "My sight is poor. I have no idea what to do. No, I should be no help."

"Then let me suggest that Your Highness step into the closet," said Jack.

"Please do it now!" he added. "You can not be too quick."

The Sultan needed no second invitation.

He glided into the closet and drew the door tight shut.

"Now, Matt, we are in for it," Jack whispered.

"That's what we are."

"We must show them what two Yankee middies can do. Of course, we stay right here behind the table. Don't you say so?"

"There can be no better place," growled Matt. "Let them get behind us if they can."

If the Turks who were hammering away on the door only knew it, they had two pretty formidable antagonists inside.

Our Yankee middies were quite expert at broad sword practice, that having been a part of their training.

Then there was another thing which, perhaps, the Turks did not stop to take into consideration.

The two boys whom they had attempted to make their tools were Americans and did not know what it was to be afraid.

All of which the palace plotters were to find out in a moment.

An unusually heavy blow was now struck.

The door yielded.

There was a ripping and tearing of the woodwork about the lock, and four men came bursting into the room.

They were evidently hired for the purpose, for they were rough looking fellows.

All wore the Turkish dress, as did Jack and Matt, and each man was armed with a curved scimitar, but the swords of the boys were straight.

They halted for an instant, throwing one glance about the room.

Evidently they were surprised at not seeing the Sultan.

It seemed as if they did not know just what to do. Suddenly a man in a dress suit and fez appeared in the doorway.

"Where is he?" he shouted. "Where is he? Answer or you die."

"I don't know who you mean!" cried Jack. "But say, you understand English. Tell your men to keep off or somebody will die!"

"By the beard of the prophet you speak the truth!" cried the man, and he added some words which the boys did not understand.

The Turks did, though.

It must have been a command to advance, for they rushed upon the boys.

Jack was ready for them.

So was Matt.

They lunged across the table, and each pinked his man.

It was done before they realized what was coming.

Two Turks went tumbling backward with sharp cries.

A big point was gained.

Five Turks remained, however.

They dashed to the right and left of the table.

One struck at Jack and the other at Matt.

If the scimiters had ever touched them it would have been all up with the boys.

This did not happen, however.

Jack parried the blow beautifully and, raising his sword, suddenly struck at the Turk's right wrist.

It was a wicked cut.

The Turk, with a roar of rage and pain, dropped the scimitar.

Holding his wrist he ran out of the room with the blood all spurting out over the carpet.

Meanwhile, Matt had driven back his man, who now took to his heels and ran down the corridor, followed by the wounded Turk and the man with the fez, while the remaining Turks lay wounded upon the floor.

Jack flew to the closet door and flung it open.

"We have cleared the way, Your Highness," he said, bowing respectfully. "Now tell us what to do next."

The Sultan was trembling so that he could scarcely speak.

"How can I ever repay you?" he said. "Once more you have saved my life."

"You know how to repay us!" cried Jack. "But this is no time to talk. Tell us what to do."

"Follow me," breathed the Sultan. "Here we cannot stay, and yet I know not what to advise. I cannot tell who are my enemies and who are my friends."

"We are your friends," said Jack.

"Yes, yes, but you do not know the palace."

"There is the harem. Possibly among the women——"

"Never!" cried the Sultan. "Women! Ha! There is not one who would not betray me. It is more than likely they are all in the plot. But come, follow me."

He staggered out of the room and along the corridor.

It was dimly lighted by a colored hanging lamp.

Apparently the Sultan did not know the palace any too well himself.

There were many doors opening off the corridor.

He hesitated before one and another, and at length threw one open, which communicated with a dark room.

Yes; this is the one," he whispered. "Inside with you, quick. For the moment we are safe."

He closed the door and shot a bolt on the inside.

"What next?" breathed Jack, for the Sultan did not speak. There was no answer.

The Sultan stood motionless, clutching Jack by the arm.

"This man is scared almost out of his wits," thought Jack. It was worse than that.

The Sultan suddenly sank to the floor in a dead faint.

"Oh, say, is he dead?" gasped Matt.

"Dead nothing," replied Jack. "He has fainted, that's all."

"What in thunder shall we do?"

"Blest if I know."

"If we only had matches."

"Ah, yes, if! There's no pocket to this infernal petticoat of mine. I've been trying to find a match."

"Ah!" groaned the Sultan. "Oh! Ah!"

"Brace up, sir," said Jack. "This don't help matters one bit."

"Where am I?" asked the Sultan feebly. "Oh, yes, I remember. Help me up."

They got him on his feet, and had scarcely done so when a rush was heard in the corridor outside, and a loud voice shouted something in Turkish.

"Oh!" groaned the Sultan. "Oh, I am lost!"

Then down he dropped to the floor again.

"Thunder!" muttered Jack. "What shall we do?" We might as well have a dead man on our hands!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DYNAMITE BOMB.

For the next ten minutes the shouts and confusion in the corridor were enough to try the strongest nerves.

The Sultan lay upon the floor and never moved.

Jack and Matt could only stay there in the darkness and wonder what was coming next.

It seemed to them that every door in the corridor was tried, the one leading into the room in which they were concealed among the rest.

No attempt was made to break it in, however, and at length there seemed to be a general retreat, and all grew still.

"They have gone, sir," Jack said to the Sultan.

"Oh, but they will come again; they will come again," was the answer. "We cannot escape."

"We can and we must," replied Jack. "Tell me your plan and I will help you all I can to carry it out."

"I must disguise myself," said the Sultan. "I must leave the palace. Once I am in the city I am safe. Once I can get to my country seat the game is in my hands."

He staggered to his feet and leaned upon Jack.

"Do you feel better?" Jack asked.

"Yes; much better," was the reply. "Have they all gone?"

"I think so."

"We cannot tell."

"If we had a light——"

"No, no, no! That would be fatal. The palace is full of spies. The door is being watched."

"It's a hard case."

"Hard! Boy, I envy you! My life is one long terror. Thank Allah you are not the Sultan. Ah, how gladly I would seek refuge in your free country if I could but do it."

"And can you not?"

"It is impossible. I should be followed up and assassinated. I—— Ha! We are discovered. It is too late!"

There was a grating noise and a dim light penetrated the room.

Jack saw that it came from a window.

Shutters had been opened and now the sash was thrown up and a man sprang into the room.

Jack and Matt drew their swords and prepared to defend themselves.

"Hold there!" whispered a familiar voice. "Do not strike at your only friend."

It was Abd-Eremin again.

The Sultan, muttering something in Turkish, threw himself into the arms of the tall Turk and wept like a child.

Abd-Eremin soothed him in words which the boys could not understand.

"Not your only friend," he said after a moment when the Sultan grew calmer. "You have another here."

"Yes, yes," said the Sultan, seizing Jack's hand.

"It may seem to you that his Imperial Highness is not a very powerful friend," continued Abd-Eremin, "but you do not know Turkey. In your country his day would probably be over after this, but not so here. If we can but get him safely out of the palace before the sun rises, twice every man among the conspirators will be dead or have fled, and his Imperial Highness will be more powerful than ever."

"And then?" said Jack, quietly.

"And then he will not forget you," the Sultan quickly replied. "Do not think it, for it is not so."

But it was just what Jack was thinking about.

He had little confidence in the promises of these men.

"Come," said Abd-Eremin then, "the way is clear. Follow me."

He led the way to the open window and climbed out upon a long balcony.

Here there were iron steps leading down to similar balconies below.

They hurried down from one to another until they had almost gained the courtyard below, when Abd-Eremin suddenly turned aside and, passing through a window, entered the palace again.

Then it was dark corridors and narrow staircases until at last a door was opened, and upon entering all found themselves in the wardrobe where Jack and Matt had dressed.

"At last!" breathed Abd-Eremin with a sigh of relief, and he hastily shot the bolt and secured the door."

"Are we safe?" asked Jack.

"For the time being, yes," was the reply.

Jack pointed to the ceiling.

"Ah! I understand," replied Abd-Eremin, and he put his hand behind the clothes and pulled an iron rod.

"It is fast now," he said, "and cannot be opened from above. That is the place where they looked down upon you after you dressed."

Jack remembered only too well.

Abd-Eremin now requested the boys to turn their backs while the Sultan changed his clothes.

When the disguising process was completed, both the Sublime Porte and Abd-Eremin had assumed the native Turkish dress, with baggy trousers, green embroidered jackets and huge white turbans on their heads.

The boys looked longingly at their own uniforms and wished that they could put them on.

It was not to be, however.

Abd-Eremin ordered them each to dress in the roughly-made garments of a Turkish laborer, after which he opened a closet and, taking out a paint box, made lines under their eyes and gave them a mask to put on their faces, which made them look as dark as the native Turk.

When all was completed the appearance of the boys was completely changed.

The Sultan now seemed to have plucked up a spirit and to be more hopeful.

He and Abd-Eremin held a long conversation in Turkish, after which the latter left the room.

"He will soon return," explained the Sultan. "Then we shall all go."

Ten minutes passed.

The Sultan did not speak and the silence grew oppressive. At last footsteps were heard outside the door.

"It is Abd-Eremin," whispered the Sultan, and he stepped to the door with the intention of shooting the bolt, but Jack laid his hand upon his arm and held him back.

"What would you do, boy?" demanded the Sultan haughtily. "Am I then not master of my own actions? What does this interference mean?"

"It means that we ought to be careful," said Jack. "He has not even knocked."

"It is Abd-Eremin, of course, and I shall open the door!" declared the Sultan.

He shot the bolt and threw back the door.

There was no one in the corridor.

All was as still as death.

"Shut it quick!" breathed Jack. "There is something wrong."

"Abd-Eremin!" called the Sultan, persisting. "Are you there?"

There was no answer.

Jack could hear a queer crackling sound in the dark corridor.

"Shut the door or we are all lost!" he cried.

He pushed the Sultan aside somewhat rudely and slammed the door.

Quick as a flash the Sultan drew a glittering dagger from under his coat and would have plunged it into Jack's heart if Matt had not caught him and pulled him back.

"How dare you lay hands on me, you Christian dogs!" shouted the Sultan, bursting with rage. "How dare—"

"Boom!"

It was an explosion outside in the corridor.

It shook the floor so that Musselmen and Christians were all tumbled together and the door fell in with a crash.

"You see! It's only dynamite!" said Jack as soon as he could find voice to speak.

Then he added:

"Christian dogs we may be, but all the same we have saved the life of Your Highness again."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TREACHERY OF THE SULTAN.

The Sultan stood clutching the clothes, his face as pale as death.

"It is as you say," he gasped. "Every move we make is watched. I—pardon me, young men! I was too hasty. Yes!"

"I should say you were," replied Jack with all the calmness he could assume.

"This makes three times we have saved your life to-night—yes, within an hour, and because we tried to save it this time

you would have stabbed one of us. Do you call that a square deal?"

"Pardon! I say pardon! When I, the Sublime Porte, ask pardon of a Christian, is it not enough?"

"It is all we are likely to get, and I suppose we will have to be satisfied," said Jack, pushing past the Sultan into the corridor.

Smoke was beginning to pour into the room.

The floor had been all torn up and the walls broken in on both sides.

In one place the floor boards were blazing, and Jack stamped out the flames.

Matt and the Sultan came out and joined him now.

The latter had again grown very meek.

"Oh, tell me what to do!" he whined.

"Where is your friend?"

"They must have killed Abd-Eremin. Without him I can never escape. By Allah, it is too much! I will drive the dagger into my own heart."

"Which would be a blamed sight more foolish than killing us," muttered Matt.

The person whose footsteps had been heard was evidently the one who had put the dynamite in the corridor.

Doubtless he would soon be back to ascertain the result of his work.

If not, others alarmed by the explosion would surely come. There was no hope for them, Jack thought, if they remained where they were.

Peering through the opening on the right, Jack saw a flight of stone steps.

"Where do those lead to?" he hastily asked.

"I do not know," replied the Sultan dismally.

"Do not know your own palace?"

"Indeed no! How should I? It does not concern me."

"It concerns you very much just now. It is as much as our lives are worth to stand here. Shall we try the steps?"

"Anything! Anything!" replied the Sultan, who was again trembling with fear.

"Follow me then," said Jack, slipping through the opening.

The Sultan lost no time in obeying, Matt bringing up the rear.

"We must hurry, hurry!" breathed Jack. "I hear people coming! Be quick!"

They ran down the stairs and were soon in darkness again.

Loud voices were now plainly to be heard above them.

Men were calling to each other.

Jack could not understand what they were saying, but probably the Sultan did, for he clutched Jack's arm tighter than ever, muttering to himself as they ran on down the steps.

"This man is going crazy," thought Jack. "Oh, if I could only see the end of it all."

They had now reached the bottom of the steps and came up against a stone door.

Jack pushed against it and it yielded.

Immediately they passed through into the open.

They had come out upon a narrow platform, extending on to a sort of canal.

Beyond was a garden filled with trees and shrubbery, beyond the yard a large building rose to the height of several stories.

Lights twinkled in the windows. It was a part of the palace.

Alongside the platform lay a small but handsome steam launch, with steam already up.

Before any one could speak or make a move, a tall, black slave, carrying a drawn scimitar, rose up before them and barred the way.

Now the boys had left their swords in the wardrobe, and save for the daggers which they still carried were unarmed.

"Ah!" breathed the Sultan, in a voice of intense relief. "I am saved!"

He did not say "we" are saved.

Jack noticed that.

Making a sign to the black and speaking some words which the boys could not comprehend, he sprang on board the launch, passed into the little cabin formed by curtains of red silk, and disappeared.

Instantly a bell tinkled.

Two men appeared, one in the bow of the launch and the other at the stern.

They were getting ready to cast off.

"Great Scott, don't we go, too!" cried Jack, for the black slave with the scimitar still barred the way and raised his weapon threateningly when they started to move toward the launch.

It was just as Jack had anticipated from the first.

Clearly the Sultan possessed the password which enabled

him to use the launch, for it immediately shot off along the canal toward a water gate beneath the large building.

The gate rose as the launch approached and dropped again as the tiny craft passed beneath.

"Thunder!" gasped Matt. "He has deserted us. He has found a way to save himself and has left us to our fate."

It was certainly so.

There stood the black like a statue.

He looked most threatening.

The boys did not know whether to advance or retreat.

Jack was furious.

He could not control himself to speak.

Yet he had expected something of this sort from the first.

The Sultan had found a chance to save himself, and he had taken it.

As to what became of the Christian dogs he did not care a rap.

But to remain standing where they were was entirely out of the question.

"We must go back," whispered Jack. "This man doesn't seem to have any order to kill us, or he would have done it before, but the quicker we get out of his way the better."

It was the wisest move they could possibly have made.

As they retreated through the door on to the dark staircase, the black made no effort to follow them or to interfere with them in any way.

Jack closed the door behind them.

Running his hand up and down he found a bolt and shot it into place.

"We are safe for the moment," he gasped, sinking down upon the steps. "Oh, Matt, this is a bad job!"

"Don't you give up or I shall go crazy, Jack."

"It was such a dirty trick. Still, it was just what I expected."

"He just dumped us, that's all."

"That's what he did."

"That nigger don't seem to be following us."

"No, he don't. Nobody seems to care what anybody does here so long as they are not interfered with themselves."

"Strange no one has followed us down these stairs, though."

"Isn't it. They must have discovered that the Sultan was missing."

"I should say so. Of course they expected to find his dead body there after the dynamite bomb was laid down."

"There's only one way to account for that."

"Well, what is it?"

"That the fellow who laid down the dynamite bomb never returned."

"Ah! You think it was somebody else that came there after the explosion?"

"That's what I do. But we must make a move. There's no sense in hanging about here any longer."

The boys stopped talking now and toiled wearily up the stairs.

It was most discouraging.

The night was wearing away and the boys were no nearer escape than when they fled from the Sultan's bed chamber.

Still, if they had only known it they were coming to another adventure which was to puzzle them greatly for the time being and at last—

But we must not anticipate.

Our story must be allowed to work itself out in its own way.

They had now gained the corridor by the wardrobe again, passing through the break in the wall.

The place was deserted, but a discovery of the highest importance was made the moment Jack set foot upon the broken floor.

Over in the corner there was a faint glimmer of light close down to the floor.

Jack stepped over to see what it meant, and saw a small dark-lantern standing on the floor with the slide closed.

He seized the lantern and partially opened the slide, throwing a stream of light upon the place.

"This is better, Matt," he whispered. "Now we can see where we are at!"

He flashed the light along the corridor.

The first thing his eyes rested upon was a low iron door on the right, which had been partially wrenched off its hinges by the explosion.

The sudden notion seized Jack to try his fortunes in that direction.

"Come, Matt!" he whispered, "we will go through the iron door. We might as well try it that way as any other."

They passed into a low passage, walled up on either side with great blocks of stone.

"Here, take hold of the door," whispered Jack. Let's put it back into place and bolt it. Nothing like heading off pursuit."

This was done.

How firm the door was after it was done Jack did not stop to inquire.

Sending a thin stream of light along the stone corridor, he traveled wearily on.

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE HAREM.

The passage into which our two Yankee middies had now penetrated proved to be an unusually long one.

It seemed to lead off to another part of the palace building altogether.

At last, however, it came to an end and, as usual, there was the flight of stone steps—two of them in fact—one leading up and the other down.

"Which way shall we go now, Matt?" questioned Jack.

"Down, of course," replied Matt.

"And why of course?"

"It may lead us out of the palace and to the canal.

"Ah! With a chance of striking a boat?"

"Exactly."

"All right. Down it is. Anything to keep moving, that's all."

This proved to be much longer, ending, like the first flight, They soon came to the foot of the steps and found themselves brought up with a round turn against a heavy iron door.

As the door was securely fastened there was nothing to be done but to return and try the other flight of steps.

This proved to be much longer, ending like the first flight, against the iron door.

"Cut off on both sides," said Matt. "What in thunder are we going to do now?"

As he spoke he struck his fist against the iron door, scarcely thinking what he was about.

Immediately shuffling footsteps were heard behind the door. Chains were let down and bolts were shot back.

"We are in for it!" breathed Matt. "Shall we scoot, Jack?"

"Scoot nothing," replied Jack. "We have got to go somewhere. We can't stay here forever. Let's take our chances with whatever is coming next."

So when the door was opened a mere crack, Jack flashed his lantern boldly.

The face of a woman appeared in the doorway.

It was a wrinkled face—a face altogether hideous.

The woman was as old as the hills.

"Ah, ha! Ah, ha!" she exclaimed, and then in a low, quavering voice she rattled off a lot of gibberish, wholly unintelligible to the boys.

The tone, however, was decidedly friendly. She opened the door and motioned them to enter.

Indeed, it seemed just as if she had expected them.

Now it was a lighted room, small and meanly furnished.

There was no carpet on the floor, and rough benches stood around.

It was long and deep and looked almost as if it had been made for a coffin.

There were holes bored in the side of the box and others in the cover, which stood leaning against it.

The old woman, chuckling and grinning horribly, pointed to the box and laughed.

"Well, what does it all mean?" exclaimed Jack, whose patience was just about exhausted.

The old woman seemed to be surprised.

She said something in her own tongue.

"It's no use," said Jack. "If you can't talk United States it's no use talking at all. We can't understand your gibberish, ma'am."

"Ha! Ha!" chuckled the old woman. "Ho! Ho!"

Then she added:

"Muley! Muley!" saying the word over many times.

"Hello! Muley comes in this trip," muttered Matt.

"Muley, by all means," added Jack.

Then something occurred which was a little more agreeable in its way, although as incomprehensible as all the rest.

The old woman began fumbling in the pocket of her dress.

In a moment she produced two rolls of coin wrapped in paper.

Breaking open one of the rolls she dropped twenty broad gold coins into Jack's hands and as many more in Matt's.

"By thunder, this is business!" muttered Matt. "If this is the harem, I say let's stop right where we are and get rich."

"Hush," said Jack. "It's all a mistake. It may lead to our escape, though, if we only keep cool."

He nodded to the old woman and calmly dropped the gold coins into his pocket.

Meanwhile, the old crone went right on talking, rattling away just as though she was understood.

"Muley!" said Jack in a venture.

"Ha! Ha! Ho! Ho! Muley! Muley!" chuckled the old hag.

Then she opened a door and in a low, croaking voice called:

"Muley! Muley!"

There was a shuffle in the passage.

Then a cracked voice was heard singing.

Muley was coming.

Jack thought fast.

He had a bait to offer, and he made up his mind to dangle it in front of the dwarf.

Muley's big head came in through the door first.

He gave a shrill laugh and pointed his long, black finger at the boys.

"He knows us!" thought Jack, and he immediately said:

"Help us, Muley. Help us to escape and I'll get you a job on board the *Saratoga*."

Muley's eyes opened as big as saucers.

"Golly, no! Would you?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I promise."

"Golly! I'd do anything to get it. Say, yo's not de right ones? Say, heard yo' uns was dead."

"Do we look it?"

"No, no! Say, we must hurry out of this or de right ones will come and den wese all in de soup."

"Just as I told you, Matt," whispered Jack.

"Muley, tell us what it all means," he hastily added. "We want to escape. We will do as I tell you if you help us now."

"Don't you fret yourself," said Muley. "Do as I tell you, and in less than twenty minutes we shall all three be out of the palace. Is the Sultan dead?"

"We know nothing of him," replied Jack.

He wisely determined that it would not pay to know anything about the Sultan then.

Muley turned and spoke hurriedly to the woman in Turkish.

The old hag nodded a great many times, laughed and chuckled and pointed to the boys.

Then Muley dropped on the floor, crossed his legs and folded his arms.

"Follow her! Do as she tells you and you will not regret it," he chuckled, "but oh, be quick! Be quick! Be quick!"

The old woman started for the corridor then.

It was long and dimly lighted by hanging lamps.

It looked like the corridor of some prison or hospital.

Opening off from it on either side were a great many doors.

These were all closed now, and the old woman shot past them, her feet sinking into the soft carpet and giving back no sound.

Every now and then she would turn and press her finger to her lips, as though to make the boys appreciate the necessity of absolute silence.

At last she threw open a door on the left and pointed inside the room.

There, lying upon the floor, stretched out on silken cushions, was the form of a veiled woman.

At first the boys thought she was dead, but as they looked more closely Jack saw the woman was simply in a deep sleep.

"Matt," he whispered, "we are expected to take this woman and put her in that box."

"An escape from the Sultan's harem, by gracious!" breathed Matt.

"Yes, and remember what Muley said," answered Jack. "Be quick! Be quick!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GIRL IN THE BOX.

What our two Yankee middies did not know about the internal workings of the harem of his imperial majesty, the Sultan of Turkey, would have filled a large book.

But this much they fully realized: They had no business there, and the sooner they got out of it the better.

This fact was impressed very clearly and distinctly upon their minds.

"Do we stand for this, or don't we, Matt?" asked Jack.

"What's the use of talking? We have got to stand for it. What else is there to do?"

"Nothing. Let's fire away."

Jack pointed to the veiled form on the divan and then toward the doorway.

The old woman nodded and clapped her hands softly; after which she put her finger to her lips again.

The boys lost no time in getting down to business.

Between them they lifted the sleeper by the shoulders and feet and carried her out into the corridor, and thence to the room which they had just left.

Muley sat just as they had left him, his big head wagging and his body rocking to and fro.

"Put her in the box," he chuckled. "Put her in the box and nail her up. No fear that she will wake up. Ho! ho! ho!"

It seemed almost cruel, but there was nothing else to do.

The old woman who had closely followed them had brought a soft cushion along, and this she placed in the box for the girl's head to rest on.

The boys lifted the unconscious form in, then laid it down.

"Put on the cover," chuckled Muley. "Nail it tight. One has escaped. Ha! ha! ha!"

Muley spoke English almost without accent, and after every remark he made his peculiar chuckle came.

Jack put the lid on the box and nailed it down.

"What are we to do now, Muley?" he asked.

"Take up the box and follow me," replied the dwarf, "and don't make one bit of noise."

There were two rope handles attached to the box.

Jack caught hold of one and Matt the other.

Muley led the way through the door, back along the stone corridor, down the steps to the lower corridor, and then down the other flight of steps, bringing up at last against the iron door.

"Stay here till I call you," he whispered. "Make no noise."

He produced a big bunch of keys, and, selecting one particular key from the rest, proceeded to open the door.

He slid through the opening so quick that Jack barely caught a glimpse of what was outside.

"It's the same old garden again, and the canal," he whispered to Matt.

"This is queer business, Jack."

"You bet it's queer business."

Muley was back in a minute.

"The coast is clear," he said. "The boat is ready. Speak no word to any one. Do just as I tell you and we may be able to escape from the Sultan's people."

"I suppose it all depends upon ourselves?" said Matt.

"Yes."

"But last time we followed you we got into trouble, and——"

"Don't follow me, then!" hissed the dwarf, savagely; and he turned and shook his ugly head in front of Matt.

"You are not the ones who were to do this business," he added. "I told you that. Go back, if you wish. In a moment the right ones will come. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Open the door, Muley. We will follow you," said Jack.

"Take the box and come," was the reply of the dwarf, and he threw the door wide open.

There was the platform again.

The spot was a little further up the canal from where the Sultan had embarked.

A boat of the same style lay in the canal.

"Put the box on the boat," said Muley.

He sprang into the boat and pushed aside the silk curtains concealing the space which might be termed the cabin.

The boys, with some difficulty, managed to lift the box into the boat and pushed it in behind the curtain.

"The oars!" said Muley. "Be quick!"

The boys sprang into the boat.

Each took up an oar and pulled off along the canal.

Muley crouched in the bow and made no sign until they came to the big iron gate which guarded the waterway.

Two black slaves now suddenly put in an appearance.

One stood on one side of the canal, the other on the other.

Muley pronounced one single word, and the gate went up.

Then it was a short pull along the dark passage and next the other gate.

Again they were challenged, and once more Muley gave the password.

The second gate flew up and they shot out upon the bay.

The dwarf pointed across the bay, over toward the Golden Horn.

"Do you see that bright light?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Jack.

"Well, pull there."

The boys pulled on, but very reluctantly.

Jack kept thinking of the unfortunate woman in the box.

"Who was she?"

What was to be her fate after they saw the last of her?

Had she also been sold to the Sultan?

Had he arranged to have her follow him to his country retreat?

"Somebody has drugged this poor girl. She is being stolen from the Sultan's harem," he thought.

And the more Jack thought of it the more determined he became that the villainous scheme should not be carried out.

"It's no use trying to do anything with Muley," he thought. "Matt and I will have to take this matter in hand ourselves."

Since Jack became a midshipman he had been a good deal on the South American station, and had there picked up a fair knowledge of Spanish.

It was the same with Matt.

Jack was most anxious to talk over the situation with Matt. Question was, did Muley understand Spanish?

Jack tried him, and found that he did not.

"I know what you are driving at," whispered Matt, in Spanish, then.

"We must see who she is," replied Jack.

"We must."

Muley was eyeing the boys closely as they talked.

Suddenly Jack shipped his oar and Matt did the same.

"Ha! What would you do?" demanded Muley.

"Open the box," replied Jack.

"No, no, no, no!"

"Yes, yes, yes, yes! And don't you try to stop us!"

"Oh, do open the box! Let me out!" a faint voice was heard to say.

The voice came from the box.

The words were English!

"Good heavens! Did you hear, Matt?" gasped Jack. "What does this mean?"

CHAPTER XVII.

PURSUED BY THE ENEMY.

"Keep back, there, Muley! Don't you dare to interfere!"

"Bad luck! Bad luck!" chattered the dwarf, wagging his bid head. "You had better not! Oh, no, you had better not!"

"Mind your own business!" retorted Jack. "If you try to muss with me you will find that you had better not!"

But Muley was not disposed to interfere in any other way than with words.

Jack had brought the claw-hammer along with him, and he had been particular not to nail the lid of the box down too firmly.

As he proceeded to draw the nails the cry for help came again.

"Be patient," Matt called out. "We are going to get you out of that, don't you be afraid."

Out came the last nail, off came the lid of the box.

It was too dark there, in behind the curtains, to see anything, and the boys had no matches.

"Give me your hand, miss, and I'll help you up," said Jack.

Matt was outside the curtain, keeping watch.

"I cannot. My hands are tied," was the answer, the voice having a muffled sound behind the veil.

"I'll cut them free," replied Jack.

He put his hand into the box, found the cord about the wrists, and severed it with his dagger.

Then, seizing one hand, he lifted the woman to a sitting position in the box.

"Oh, thank you! Thank you, a thousand times!" she exclaimed, throwing aside the veil.

"Oh!" exclaimed Jack.

There was but little light in behind the curtains.

Jack's eyes had become accustomed to the dimness, however, and what little there was, still was enough to show him a face which he could never forget.

"It is you!" he gasped.

For there sat the pretty American girl from the music hall, who had been sold to the Sultan.

"Matt, look here!" cried Jack, excitedly, and Matt pushed aside the curtain and came in.

Before he had a chance to open his mouth or even express his surprise, Muley's voice was heard calling out in a low, thrilling way:

"Do you want to die? Do you want to go back where you came from? If you don't, break away! Break away!"

Jack pushed his way out from behind the curtains.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"Look!" said the dwarf, pointing behind them.

One glance was enough.

A long, narrow barge, similar to the boat in which they were seated, only a great deal larger, was being pulled rapidly toward them by four men.

"Ha! ha! ha!" chuckled Muley. "Those are the right ones. Our escape has been discovered. Ho! ho! ho!"

Jack was thoroughly frightened.

There is no denying that.

He caught up the oars and, flinging them out, began to pull for all he was worth, at the same time calling to Matt.

"What is it?" demanded Matt, looking out from behind the curtains.

"We are being followed!"

"Jack, that's Christine Ajarian, did you know?"

"Of course I knew. That's what I called you out for. Are you going to take an oar?"

"Sure!" replied Matt, dropping into his place.

The boat went spinning, then.

Muley just rolled himself up and crouched in the bow.

"I told you! I warned you!" he said. "Now we all die!"

After that he relapsed into silence, and the boat flew on.

A moment later the curtain was pushed aside again.

"May I come out? Can I help any?" Christine asked, in a faltering voice.

"Indeed you cannot, miss," replied Jack. "The very best thing you can do is to stop where you are."

"Are we in danger?"

"Yes, great danger."

"I am so sorry, for your sake. You have done so much for me."

"We have done our best," replied Jack, "but it is only fair to let you know that we did not know it was you in the box."

"I'll go inside and keep out of the way," said Christine. "Do what you can for me. Don't let me be taken back to the Sultan's harem again."

She passed behind the curtain and the boys pulled harder than ever.

Little was said after that.

Jack began to reflect upon the helplessness of his position.

He had no idea where to go or what to do, and he said as much to Matt.

"Same here," replied Matt, in Spanish.

"Well, and what then?" returned Jack, speaking in the same language.

"I don't say give up, but unless we can get aboard some foreign ship we shall certainly be captured."

"So I think."

"But what do you think of pulling where Muley wants us to pull?"

"Over to that light?"

"Yes."

"That it will bring no good to us."

"Just my opinion."

"That boat is gaining on us."

"It certainly is."

"Bad job for us, too. By the way, of course Muley never had any other idea than to give this girl up to whoever was to claim her."

"Of course not."

Thus the boys talked, but they could come to no conclusion. Meanwhile the boat was steadily gaining upon them, and if they expected to escape, Jack saw that something must be done right away.

Muley apparently had gone to sleep.

Since the boys "called him down" he seemed to take no interest in what was going on.

"Here we go to dodge them!" said Jack, suddenly turning aside and sending the boat in under a long wharf, which projected out into the bay.

They were now pretty well over toward the Golden Horn, where Muley had pointed out the light.

To go further in that direction Jack felt would be decidedly risky.

The only thing to do was to give their pursuers the slip.

For this purpose the move had been made none too soon.

The other boat was close behind them.

A light fog had fallen over the bay.

This, to a certain extent, concealed their movements.

And Jack pulled on into the darkness, under the wharf.

CHAPTER XVIII.

INTO A TRAP.

The boat was no sooner fairly under the wharf than Muley roused up.

Probably if Jack had had the faintest notion of what was coming he would have got the boat away from that wharf with all possible speed.

But he hadn't.

He never dreamed that he was running straight into the lion's mouth, so to speak.

What we have to do with just now is Muley's mouth, however.

He suddenly opened it.

Out of it came a strange cry, which so startled the boys that Jack almost dropped the oars.

"What in the world do you want to make all that noise for, Muley?" asked Jack, in an angry tone.

Muley made no answer.

The answer came in another way, however.

Suddenly there was a low cry ahead of them, and then a blaze of light appeared in the distance under the wharf.

"Ha! ha! ha! You came to the right place!" chuckled Muley.

"Now go on! Now go on! Oh, yes!"

There was no help for it.

The light showed the boys that they were not alone.

Four small boats lay under the wharf.

Two were behind the boat in which our Yankee middies were, and two were ahead.

In each boat were four men armed with rifles.

The rifles were not pointed at the boys, but Jack knew well enough that they soon would be if they did otherwise than they were told.

"Pull on!" cried Muley. "Pull on! Pull straight ahead!"

Jack bit his lips and pulled in silence.

Nothing was said to them.

Some of the men were Turks, others seemed to be black slaves.

Holding their rifles ready for business, they just sat there and watched the boat as it shot under a hanging gate of the same kind they had passed under at the palace.

The gate dropped behind them, but the light still remained and they still found themselves under the wharf.

Jack and Matt pulled on, savagely, and never said a word.

In a moment they came out from under the wharf.

They now found themselves in a broad pool in front of a large building.

A company of soldiers was drawn up in line upon a broad, marble platform.

Lights twinkled in all the windows.

"We are dished!" groaned Matt. "We have just jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire."

"No escape now!" moaned Christine.

They pulled on up to the marble landing stairs, for there was nothing else to do.

"Let me talk," said Muley, in a whisper. "Then we give up the girl, but we escape."

"You're a black fiend!" stormed Matt.

"A traitor of the worse kind!" added Jack.

"Ho! ho! ho!" chuckled Muley. "Did I tell you to come here? No, no, I think not. Ho! ho! ho!"

An officer, with richly embroidered coat and gold-hilted sword, came down the landing steps.

Muley sprang up and threw aside the curtains, pointing to the empty box and to Christine.

A few words passed between them.

Then the officer spoke to Christine, in Turkish or Armenian.

The poor girl came out from behind the curtains and was assisted upon the landing.

The officer led her up the steps, and, passing on to a door in the big house, she disappeared.

"That's the last of her," said Jack, dolefully. "What's to become of us, I wonder? It would have been better if we had spoken to Muley fair."

It would, perhaps, have been the means of the boys making their own escape, but even this is doubtful.

Matt had no time to answer, when the water-gate flew up, and a boat, the very duplicate of their own, came into the pool.

Two Turks were at the oars, and they began shouting something to the troops, in an angry fashion, at the same time pointing to our two Yankee middies.

"Those are the fellows who were chasing us," whispered Jack. "They are the ones who were to have carried off Christine."

Another officer suddenly came out of a door in the palace.

A junior officer, with the troops, spoke to him and pointed to the boys.

The officer, who was a fat, pompous little man, came bustling down to the landing stairs.

The Turks on the boat began calling to him, making a great clatter.

The officer held up his hand for silence, and said something to Jack and Matt.

Jack shook his head and pointed to Muley.

This seemed to anger the officer greatly.

Bursting with rage, he shouted to the soldiers, and four of them came charging down upon our two Yankee middies, who waited their coming in despair.

CHAPTER XIX.

PRISONERS STILL.

"Well, here we are again, Jack. By gracious, it's too bad!"

The two Yankee middies were once more prisoners.

They found themselves locked in a cell, in the basement of the big building where they had come by mistake, and in this cell they remained for three days.

On the morning of the fourth day, Matt slept late while Jack, who found it difficult to sleep at all, was up early, pacing the floor of his cell.

If he had but known it he was "up against" another adventure.

It began just as the first rays of daylight came creeping into the prison corridor, for just then the door opened and a dried-up old Turk appeared, closely followed by a veiled woman.

They walked up to the cell in which the two boys were confined and paused.

Not a word was spoken.

The woman peered through the bars.

Presently she spoke.

Her voice was low and singularly sweet.

Better still, the words were in English.

"You are one of the American boys?" was what she said.

"I am, madam," replied Jack, bowing, politely.

"I have heard of you through one of the slaves of the harem," continued the woman, a young Armenian singing girl, who was sold to the Sultan. "By mistake you brought her here to this place?"

"Yes, madam," replied Jack. "What you say is true. May I inquire—"

"Ask me nothing," broke in the woman, haughtily. "It is for you to listen, not to talk. Do you want to escape?"

"Indeed we do, madam."

"Suppose I should suggest a way of escape to you, would you be willing to do just as I told you, without asking a single question?"

"Yes, madam."

"And your friend who sleeps; can you answer for him?"

"I can, madam. He will do whatever I do; upon that you may rely."

"It is enough," replied the woman. "You will soon hear from me. Now, farewell."

Thus saying, the woman glided away, followed by the old jailer, who had stood, like a statue, at her side.

Jack instantly woke up Matt and told him what had happened.

"Well, well! We always seem to be running up against something," said Matt. "What do you suppose it is, now?"

"Another plot, if you want my opinion."

"But against whom? The master of this house?"

"It must be."

"Who do you suppose he can be?"

"Give it up. I tried to question the woman, but she wouldn't stand for it. She as good as told me to mind my own business and hold my tongue."

An hour or more passed, and nothing happened.

Then suddenly the jailer appeared, followed by a handsome young Turk, a mere boy, who walked up to the cell, and, looking between the bars, smiled and nodded in a friendly way.

The jailer, producing his keys, opened the door and motioned to the boys to come out.

The Turkish boy then motioned them to follow him, and led the way out of the corridor, up a long flight of narrow stairs, coming at length to a small door concealed in a panel in a most curious way.

No one would ever have guessed that there was a door.

The Turkish boy held a lantern down close to the stairs and touched a secret spring.

The panel glided noiselessly to one side, revealing the door.

Another secret spring was touched, and the door opened toward them.

Behind it hung a heavy curtain, cutting off the view.

The boy motioned Jack to pass on.

Jack passed through the curtain, coming into an elegantly furnished room.

Matt followed him, and the door closed noiselessly behind them.

"Where is the boy?" said Matt. "Isn't he coming, too?"

He turned and pushed aside the curtain, then discovering for the first time that the door was closed; in fact, he could not see the door.

"Hello! Still prisoners, I guess," said Jack.

It was broad daylight now, and the boys found themselves standing in one of the most sumptuously furnished rooms they had ever seen.

There was another opening off from it, and still another beyond that.

One was fitted up as a bedroom.

The one in which they were was evidently the parlor or sitting-room of the suite.

Here were mirrors and expensive paintings, great rugs lay about the floor, and there were divans and comfortable easy-chairs everywhere.

In the dining-room was a large, oak sideboard, loaded down with expensive wines, silver barbets of fruit and boxes of choice cigars.

The bed in the room beyond was large and very handsome, the wood being elegantly carved.

Opening off from this room was a bath, and here two complete suits of clothes, in the European style, hung on pegs.

Upon a table lay a sheet of paper on which these words had been hastily scrawled:

"Use all as your own. Dress in these clothes, leave those which you have on here. Make yourselves entirely at home."

"Well, this is immense!" exclaimed Matt. "I think I shall strike for a bath right away."

"Take what you can get," said Jack, "but I want to know more of this place first."

He walked over to one of the windows and looked out.

It was high up from the water. He looked out upon the bay of Constantinople. The view was charming, but not encouraging, for there was no chance to escape.

CHAPTER XX.

THE EUNUCH WHO FELL DEAD IN THE DOORWAY.

Our two Yankee middies were "up against" another mystery, to use Jack's favorite phrase.

It had been three days in the dungeon, and now it was three more in this gilded cage.

Meanwhile, no one came near them—not a soul.

And yet some one got into the room and got out again without the boys knowing when or how they did it, and they watched closely, too.

Three times a day a sumptuous meal was placed upon the table by unseen hands.

As long as the boys watched, nothing came.

But at the right time, as soon as they turned their backs there was the food upon the table and the empty dishes were removed in the same mysterious way.

In the morning their clothes were found carefully brushed and laid out for them, ready to put on.

And yet they never saw a soul or heard a sound.

"It is the strangest thing in the world," remarked Matt, as he sat playing a game of pinochle with Jack, about eleven o'clock on the evening of the third day. "No matter how hard we try to catch a glimpse of our mysterious servant, it doesn't seem to be a particle of use."

"I wouldn't wonder a bit if he was in there now," said Jack.

"Yes, but if we go into the other room we won't find him."

"Or her."

"Right. Or her. I have half a notion that we are in the harem."

"I know you have thought so right along. Hark! didn't you hear something in the dining-room, then?"

"Hush! don't move. Keep your eye fixed on the glass."

The boys had tried a new trick that evening.

Jack had taken one of the long mirrors in the sitting-room and put it where a handsome picture had formerly hung.

This mirror reflected a portion of the dining-room, and the bedroom beyond.

At night the rooms were all brightly illuminated by electric lights, and Jack hoped to be able to catch a glimpse of the mysterious visitor in the glass, but so far he had watched in vain.

Now it seemed to him that he could hear light footsteps in the dining-room, and he fixed his eyes upon the mirror.

Suddenly a tall form flitted across it.

It seemed to be a woman, dressed entirely in white, her features concealed by a long, white veil.

"Did you see?" he whispered to Matt.

"I did."

They waited.

The veiled figure did not flit across the mirror, however, and not a sound was heard in the other room.

At last Jack could stand it no longer, and he got up and went into the dining-room.

Everything was as he had left it, except that a paper lay upon the table, which had not been there before.

Jack seized the paper and read as follows:

"To-night is the night. Do not retire. At twelve o'clock you will have a visitor. Be prepared!"

"It beats the band," said Matt, "and I don't like it. I wish we were well out of this."

"I was thinking—hush! hush!"

Another figure flitted across the mirror. This time it was different.

As before, it was a woman; but instead of wearing a white veil it was as black as night.

Moreover, the figure had gone the other way, toward the table, instead of away from it.

Jack thought he saw his chance and he determined to take it.

In fact, he had prepared for this very emergency, after the white figure flitted away, by slipping off his shoes.

"Hist! I'm going!" he whispered to Matt.

He still had the dagger which had been given him to assassinate the Sultan with, for this time, when they were put in the cell, the boys had not been searched.

Jack darted into the dining-room.

Silent as his movements were, they were heard.

The black figure sprang away from the table and made a dart toward the wall.

Jack did not attempt to follow.

The black figure kicked against the wall and a panel shot back.

Then, all in an instant, just as she was about to dart through the opening, she threw up her hands and, with a terrible cry, fell, face downward, upon the floor.

"What is it?" exclaimed Matt, hurrying to Jack's side.

"Hush! I don't know," breathed Jack.

The figure did not move.

The boys stood still for a few moments, not knowing what to do.

"Come," whispered Matt at last, "we have got to get a move on us. We can't stay here waiting for something to happen."

"No; I'll investigate. By Jove! we see the way out, at all events."

"We'll see our finish before we get through, I'm thinking," muttered Matt, as Jack bent down over the black figure on the floor.

"It's a eunuch in woman's clothes!" whispered Jack, as he pulled off the black veil.

The face was that of a hideously ugly old man.

Jack examined him carefully, but could discover no sign of life.

Meanwhile, they stood, the secret panel invitingly open, and Matt had made other discoveries as well.

"See here, on the table, Jack," he said, when at last Jack stood up and declared that he had given up any hope of bringing the man back to life.

"Hello, another letter!" cried Jack. "But what's in the bags?"

There were two small canvas bags standing on the table, and a written paper lay upon them.

"Take the gold. It is yours," read Matt. "Be ready at midnight. We expect faithful service. We pay well and we pay in advance."

Jack opened one bag and Matt the other.

Both were stuffed full of gold coins.

"Well, well, well!" exclaimed Matt. "Here's business. What's to be done?"

"Look at the time," said Jack, pointing to the handsome clock on the mantel.

"Quarter past eleven."

"That gives us three-quarters of an hour to act in, and I'm going right at it now."

Jack went over to the body of the eunuch and drew it away from the secret panel.

"Here's the dark-lantern," he exclaimed. "I thought so. Well, good-by, Matt, I'm going on an exploring tour."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TWO YANKEE MIDDIES MEET THE SULTAN AGAIN.

The dark-lantern lay under the body of the dead eunuch; it had dropped from his hand when he fell.

"You don't go without me," said Matt, when Jack opened the slide and threw a flood of light into the opening behind the secret panel.

"All right, come on, then. I'm going right now."

"The panel ought to be fastened back. It may close on us."

"This will fix it," replied Jack, taking a large vase from beside the fireplace and laying it in the opening. "It will not move now."

The boys stepped into the narrow passage behind the panel, then.

There was a flight of stairs beyond, barely wide enough for one person to pass.

Jack led the way.

The flight was a large one, and at its foot the boys came to a long, narrow corridor, which seemed to run in three directions; straight at first and then branching off to the right and left.

As the boys stole along they could hear people talking behind the partition wall on their left.

A little further on they heard the sound of music.

At another place they could hear the sound of hammering, and as they listened further there was a sound like the whirl of a lathe.

"We are behind a number of rooms," whispered Jack. "This passage runs between them and the partition wall of other corridors. I'll bet you what you like every one is tapped by a secret panel. See here!"

He pointed to the partition, and, sure enough, a sliding panel could be seen. It was plain on this side, but, no doubt, invisible on the other.

"Well, what shall we do?" asked Matt, at last. "Do we go any further with our exploring tour?"

"I think we had better," replied Jack. "Let's open this panel right here and push on, hit or miss."

"I'm ready. Anything is better than going back upstairs."

Jack pressed the button then, and the panel flew back.

It showed the boys an elegantly furnished chamber, with others opening out of it.

The room was brilliantly lighted, but vacant.

The boys stood and listened, but could hear no sound.

They passed through the panel.

No sooner had they done so than it closed, noiselessly, behind them; the carved woodwork of the wall seemed to match perfectly. There was now no trace of the panel to be seen.

"Thunder! we are in for it now!" breathed Jack. "I don't believe we can get out if we try."

"That's what. Hark! I hear footsteps."

A door opened, and a small man, richly dressed, entered the room.

He started back, with an exclamation of terror, as he saw the boys standing there in the full light.

But he was not a bit more surprised than our Yankee midshipmen, for they had recognized the Sultan of Turkey at a glance!

"Your Highness!" said Jack, bowing profoundly. "Do you not remember me?"

"What!" exclaimed the Sultan. "Yes, it is! The two American midshipmen, by the beard of the prophet! In the name of Allah, what brought you here?"

"It is a long story, Your Highness," said Jack; "believe me, we had no idea that we were intruding into your private apartments. You will do well to listen to us. I think there is another plot on foot against you. I——"

"No, no!" cried the Sultan. "It cannot be. The plotters are all dead. To the last man they were executed two days ago."

"Still, I think I am right in what I say," replied Jack, quietly.

For a few moments the Sultan paced up and down the floor, in a state of great agitation.

The boys stood motionless, awaiting his pleasure.

At last he turned to them and said very graciously:

"At all events, I am glad to see you. Please be seated. Kindly tell me all, and, above everything else, let me know how it is that you happen to be in my Waterside Palace. It is something which I cannot understand."

Jack and Matt seated themselves by the table, and, as rapidly as he could, the former detailed all that had happened to them since they parted with the Sultan.

His story was listened to with deep attention.

The Sultan puffed away at his cigarette and never spoke a word until Jack was all through.

"This is most remarkable," he said, then. "After I reached this palace, on that night which I shall never forget, I gave orders to have you at once set free and richly rewarded. The police of Constantinople have been searching for you ever since. I little dreamed that you were under the same roof with me, and I cannot now understand how it happened. You are entirely right. This is another plot against me. Probably the management of it is in the hands of persons belonging to this palace, who know nothing of what happened before, and, just as before, they select the two Christian prisoners to do the work, intending to kill them as soon as it is done, and thereby conceal their own hand in the game. Young men, I thank you. This is the strange working of the will of Allah. Heaven has sent you to me to save my life a second time. It is something which I never shall forget."

Having delivered himself of this long speech, the Sultan leaned back on his divan and deliberately rolled another cigarette.

It drove Jack almost wild.

He could see by the clock on the mantel that it was almost midnight. He thought of the dead body lying in the rooms above. Surely if anything was to be done, now was the time to act.

He turned to the Sultan and said:

"Your Highness, we await your orders. I wish to ask one favor, if we succeed in pleasing you to-night and you set us free to-morrow, remember that all this has come about through our efforts to save a fellow Christian from a life of long misery in your harem. To the Armenian singing girl, Christine Ajarian, sold to your majesty, you owe as much as you do to us."

"Ha!" cried the Sultan, frowning. "And you ask?"

"That she be set free!" said Jack, boldly.

"It shall so be," replied the Sultan, after pondering a moment.

Then he arose and threw aside his cigarette, saying:

"Return to the secret rooms upstairs. Do as the plotters direct, and rely upon me to protect you."

CHAPTER XXII.

IN A DILEMMA.

As the Sultan gave the order for Jack and Matt to return to the secret chamber, he walked over to the wall and, touching some hidden spring, threw the panel open.

"The way lies clear," he said. "Go!"

"Come on, Matt," said Jack, and they passed into the corridor again.

"By Jove! What do you think of it, Jack?" Matt whispered; he had been silent throughout it all.

"We can only live in hope," replied Jack. "I wish we were well out of it, but the Sultan seems to think that we still have work to do."

"Strange that we should strike him here, is it not?"

"More than strange."

By this time the boys had reached the secret staircase, and they lost no time in getting back to the room.

Everything here was just as they had left it.

"We had better hide this thing," said Jack, pointing to the body of the eunuch. "It won't do for it to be found here."

They took the body up between them and carried it into the bathroom and closed the door upon it.

Then Jack went to work on the secret panel, and for several minutes earnestly studied its mechanism.

"I can work this thing," he said, "from either one side or other. I am going to close it now."

He showed Matt the hidden spring, and when he touched it the panel flew back into place.

"Time!" cried Matt, pointing to the clock.

The hands indicated the midnight hour.

The critical moment was almost at hand.

"We will pocket this money, anyway," said Jack. "Of course, I shall offer the gold to the Sultan if he stands by us. Meanwhile, there is no use leaving it here."

They emptied the contents of the two different bags into their different pockets, and then going into the sitting-room, started the pinochle game again.

They had not played ten minutes when a shadow fitting across the mirror told that some one else had entered by the secret panel.

"Ahem!"

Some one cleared their throat loudly in the dining-room.

"Hello, there!" called Jack, slapping down a card. "If you want to see us, come in here; we are busy with this game."

He did not even look around.

A tall, handsome Turk, wearing an embroidered coat and a red fez, entered the room, followed by a veiled woman almost as tall as himself, an entirely different person from the one who had been the means of setting the boys free from the dungeon.

"Gentlemen, I salute you," said the Turk, speaking good English, as, indeed, almost all the nobles connected with the court of the Sultan of Turkey do; "I am Mohammed Oscanyon Bey; this lady I will not introduce to you, as such is not the custom in this country. With your permission, we will be seated, as I have a little business to transact with you to-night."

Jack arose and placed chairs, bowing politely to the veiled woman, who merely inclined her head in return.

"I have seen you before, sir," he then said. "I had the honor to escort you and a party of your friends over the United States battleship Saratoga some days ago."

"It is so," replied Oscanyon Bey. "Your name has escaped me, young man."

"Jack Sheldon is my name. This is my friend, Matt Carpenter."

"Just so. I am informed of your story. Through trying to save a young Armenian girl from the Sultan's harem you got into trouble. You were mixed up in the late plot in the Imperial palace. Through a mistake you became prisoners here. I am stating facts, I believe?"

"You are."

"Naturally you desire to escape and rejoin your ship?"

"We do."

"Naturally, also, you would like to see the Armenian slave girl set free?"

"We should."

"Exactly so. Very well; serve me to-night and your wishes shall be gratified. As to reward, you have been already paid, I believe?"

"Two bags of gold were left on the table in the other room and we put all the money in our pockets," replied Jack. "That was right, I suppose?"

"Quite right. Now, to business; listen to me, and do not interrupt until I am through."

Crossing his legs and leaning back in his chair, the Turk began:

"To you gentlemen this is a strange country; things are done here in a way that you cannot understand. I have long been tired of my life here. Although I do not deny that I am high in the service of the Sultan, I am still weary of the restraint of my life and of the constant danger in which I stand of losing my head."

"It is the same with this lady. She is weary of her life in this palace. Who she is does not concern you. It is sufficient that she desires to cast her fortunes with mine. In short, we want to run away and seek refuge in America where we can enjoy a degree of freedom which is utterly unknown here."

"Just so," said Jack; "all of which, sir, is not my business at all."

"Quite right," replied Oscanyon Bey. "What you see to-night, as well as what you hear, must never be mentioned. For this we shall have to trust you. What we want is your help. In half an hour a boat will be under the sea wall of this building; you have seen it from your window. Into that boat we must be lowered from the window. It is impossible for us to leave in the ordinary way; in short, we are prisoners here ourselves, for, although we have entire freedom within the palace, we cannot set foot beyond its walls. Do you begin to understand?"

"I do, sir, but how about the Armenian girl Christine?"

"She will be set free in the morning. The chief of the Sultan's eunuchs, who has charge of the harem, is helping us in this matter."

"And who now lies dead in the bathroom, if I know anything," thought Jack, but he never said a word, simply bowing in reply.

"Of course," added Oscanyon Bey. "you will not accompany us on the steamer. The Saratoga is now at Alexandria. You will hide yourselves in the city and take passage across the Mediterranean as soon as possible."

"For which passports will be needed," said Jack.

"And which are here ready prepared for you," replied Oscanyon Bey, taking two legal documents from his pocket and passing them across the table.

Jack examined them carefully.

They were properly prepared, and insured the departure of Samuel Smith and James Davenport from Constantinople at any time.

"Do you consent?" asked Oscanyon Bey.

"I do," replied Jack.

"Then there is my hand upon it. The bargain is sealed." They shook hands heartily.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN THE SULTAN'S TREASURE ROOM.

Oscanyon Bey arose and walked to the windows of the bedroom.

As they passed through the dining-room Jack noticed that a coil of rope lay upon the table.

The secret panel was closed.

"About a hundred, is it not?" asked the Turk, opening the window and looking out.

"All of that," replied Jack.

"Can you make a boatswain's chair and rig up a noose so that it can be let down in it?"

"I can. Have you brought a block?"

"No. I could not get one. You will have to make fast here but there is plenty of rope, at least three hundred feet."

"All right. I can manage."

Jack went to work on the ropes then.

In a short time he had everything in readiness.

The ropes were securely fastened to the bed, and the loose end ran through a carefully prepared noose which served as a block.

Jack tried it and found that its working was perfect.

Meanwhile, the veiled woman sat in the other room motionless and silent.

Matt, who seldom did much talking, helped to arrange the ropes.

When all was complete, Oscanyon Bey, without a word, pressed the spring which controlled the secret panel, and the narrow door flew back.

"A way out," he said, pointing. "It may surprise you. Probably you did not guess it was there."

Jack nodded.

"And why am I shown it now?" he asked.

"Follow me, and you will see," replied Oscanyon Bey; "let your friend come, too."

"Come on, Matt," said Jack, starting to pass through the panel.

"Wait a moment," said the Turk. "When you were first visited in your cell you were asked if you could fight."

"Yes."

"And you replied that you would to obtain your freedom."

"Yes."

"Very well; here are two revolvers, one for each of you. Both are loaded; you may have to use them, but you are not to do so unless forced. Now follow me."

Oscanyon Bey went straight to the secret panel which connected with the Sultan's chamber.

Here he paused, and putting his ear to the partition, listened attentively.

Jack and Matt watched him in silence.

They were fully prepared to see him open the panel, and Jack made up his mind to stand by the Sultan if it came to another attempt at assassination.

The panel was not opened, however. After a moment Oscanyon Bey passed on along the secret corridor almost to its end, lighting the way with a small dark-lantern.

Here he pressed the spring of another secret panel which immediately flew back, disclosing a small room lined with iron plates from floor to ceiling.

Around the room stood a number of large iron chests of ancient pattern.

There was a door in the opposite partition wall.

Besides the chests there was nothing in the room.

Jack was about to enter when Oscanyon Bey pulled him back.

"Hist!" he whispered. "Not yet. Listen!"

They stood listening attentively for several moments, but not a sound was to be heard.

"We are now at the secret entrance to the Sultan's private treasury vault," whispered Oscanyon Bey. "In those chests are many valuable gems and antique pieces of jewelry, the collection of centuries. I suppose a hint is as good as a chapter in a matter like this?"

"Some of those things go with us, is that the idea?" asked Jack quietly.

"It is precisely the idea; but there are objections in the way of the plan."

"So I should suppose. We cannot break open those chests without a sledge-hammer, and if we made any attempt to do it the whole palace would be aroused."

"You are right, and you are wrong. We can open them without a sledge-hammer, for I carry the keys."

"You are the Sultan's private treasurer, perhaps?"

"Perhaps it don't concern you who I am. That has nothing to do with it. The real objection lies in the fact that outside of that door stand two armed slaves, unless they are asleep. They carry the keys of the door, but they know nothing of this secret panel. At the slightest alarm we will have them to deal with. I think you understand."

"I do. You propose to rob the boxes; we are to defend you in case of an attack."

"Don't call it robbery!" hissed Oscanyon Bey fiercely. "You know nothing of the circumstances. You are not called upon to decide on the right or wrong of this matter, young man."

Jack nodded and was silent.

"I shall now proceed to business," continued Oscanyon Bey. "You are to stand here at the door and guard my retreat."

He took from inside his coat a black silk mask which he adjusted to his face.

Then removing his shoes he stepped through the secret panel, and producing two stout canvas bags and a bunch of keys, proceeded to open the chests.

Three of them yielded noiselessly to the keys, and the lids were raised.

Oscanyon Bey bent over the chests and began filling the bags with little boxes, then came great handfuls of gems, then many pieces of rare and beautiful jewelry. He worked rapidly and with considerable nervousness.

It was evident that he expected an attack.

"Suppose the door opens and we are attacked, do we fire?" asked Jack, in an almost inaudible whisper.

"Of course," answered Matt.

At the same instant Oscanyon Bey started to move on to the fourth chest.

In some way he managed to strike against the lid of the third chest, which immediately fell with a crash.

"Cover me, boys!" he gasped, seizing the bags.

The warning did not come an instant too soon, for the iron door flew open like a flash and two tall blacks burst into the treasure room.

They were armed with scimeters and made a quick dash for Oscanyon Bey, whose foot slipped on the iron floor and down he went at Jack's feet.

Bang! Bang!

Instantly the boys fired over the heads of the two blacks who fell back upon the door, while Oscanyon Bey, clutching the bags, crawled out into the secret passage and shot the panel back into place.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

"By Allah! That came near to finishing me!" gasped Oscanyon Bey. "Fly! Back to the room! The worst has happened! If the boat has not arrived I fear we are lost!"

They now had come opposite to the secret panel leading to the Sultan's apartments.

Scarcely had they passed when the panel flew back and a number of armed soldiers wearing the Turkish uniform came crowding out into the passage yelling like demons, firing revolvers up the stairs, and charging after the flying forms.

It was terribly sudden and terribly exciting.

The secret panel at the head of the stairs stood open, and the veiled woman stood at the entrance as Oscanyon Bey darted through.

"Quick! Follow me, boys!" he cried.

Jack and Matt slid through in a hurry.

An instant later and heavy blows were showered upon the panel.

Oscanyon Bey, assisted by Jack, tumbled the big dining table against it.

"It is all we can do!" panted the Turk.

The veiled woman was at the window then, and she called out something which the boys could not understand.

"The boat is here!" cried Oscanyon Bey. "Fatima goes first. For the love of Allah be quick, boys. The woman is my sister, and one of the many wives of the Sultan. It is death to us both if we are found here two minutes from now, and need I add that it is death to you?"

"Guard the door, Matt," said Jack coolly. "Shoot down the first man who enters."

He leaned out of the window and saw below a ship's long boat pulled by four men.

He signaled to them to be ready, and then helped Oscanyon Bey to lift the woman upon the window sill.

Trembling all over, she lowered herself into the noose and clutched the ropes on either side.

Louder and louder the blows came thundering upon the door as Jack gradually played out the rope.

He knew just what he was about, and he did the job successfully.

"At last!" gasped the Turk. "Boy, how can I ever thank you? Even if I am killed my sister is now safe."

"You better hurry up!" gasped Matt. "I don't believe the old thing will hold out much longer."

Jack rattled the rope up and Oscanyon took his chances in the boatswain's chair, safely reaching the boat.

"It's up to you and me, now, Matt," whispered Jack. "How about the door?"

"It's as tough as iron. Did he carry those bags down with him?"

"You bet he did."

"Now, Matt!" cried Jack, for the chair was up again.

"You first. I'll let you down."

Matt yielded and was safely landed in the boat.

As Jack leaned out the window to see if he was actually there, the door came crashing in.

From under the table the soldiers darted out into the room. They did not find Jack, however. He was sliding down the rope.

It burnt his hands horribly; the shots came rattling all around him, but for all that he dropped safely into the boat, and the four Italian sailors, for such they were, pulled away.

Pulled away to safety for Oscanyon Bey and his sister, putting them on board of an Italian steamer, which immediately sailed.

Jack and Matt were transferred to another boat and taken ashore, finishing out the night in an obscure hotel by the waterside.

The first thing in the morning they engaged passage on the regular steamer for Alexandria, and were about to go aboard, deeply regretting that they could not be sure of Christine's safety, when they were seized by a company of four soldiers and a captain, hustled into a hack, and taken to the Grand Hotel.

This was a surprise, for they thought they were going straight to their death.

They were escorted to the hotel entrance, and after taking them to a room and bidding them enter, the captain saluted and withdrew his men.

"This is strange," exclaimed Jack, immensely relieved, of course. "I wonder what it can mean."

He opened the door, entered the room, and then he knew. There sat Christine awaiting them.

She was not only free, but she had five hundred dollars in her pocket, but whether her escape was due to the Sultan or to Oscanyon Bey she did not know.

The poor girl thanked our two Yankee middies most heartily, for, of course, it was to them that she really owed her escape.

Jack and Matt went on board the packet, where they found a letter:

"I have kept my oath. Go in peace. Trust me that the girl you fought so stubbornly to protect shall not be again disturbed. Accept the inclosed as a token of my gratitude. You might have trusted me. You would not have been harmed. Farewell."

The letter was signed with the Taghra, that strange signature which has been used by the different Sultans of Turkey for three hundred years, and contained a draft on Alexandria for five hundred pounds.

And this was the end of the strange adventures of our Yankee middies, for at Alexandria Jack and Matt found the Saratoga and received a hearty welcome from their friends, for they had been given up for dead.

Shortly afterward the battleship sailed for the Asiatic station, and still later returned to the United States.

To-day Jack is a lieutenant, and Matt expects a similar promotion next year.

Upon arriving at New York a letter came to Jack postmarked New Orleans, and signed by Oscanyon Bey.

It contained a few simple hearty words thanking our hero and Matt for what they did.

But from that day to this neither of our Yankee middies have ever heard another word from the pretty Armenian singer who was sold to the Sultan.

Next week's issue will contain "WORKING THE ROAD; OR, BEATING HIS WAY TO BUFFALO." By Allan Arnold.

CURRENT NEWS

The wealth of the United States exceeds the combined wealth of Great Britain and Ireland and France. Here are the figures: Great Britain and Ireland, \$72,000,000,000; France, \$46,000,000,000; the United States, \$130,000,000,000. Thus it will be seen that the wealth of this country exceeds the combined wealth of Great Britain, Ireland, and France by \$12,000,000,000.

Three revenue officers probably owe their lives to the fact that they hung their coats on some bushes when they began stalking a moonshiner's still in the hills near Franklin, Va. While they were destroying the still, their coats were riddled with bullets from a near-by grove. The shots came from such a distance that it is hardly probable that the moonshiners could tell the coats were empty.

The average porter as a medium for the announcement of names of stations is susceptible of considerable improvement. A new invention called the telebonograph has just been tried at Vienna, and is regarded as a great success. The apparatus was fixed up at the railway station, charged with the name of the station, and also of the stations at which the train was to call on its journey. When the button was touched the machine worked, and from the trumpet-shaped sounder there came a string of words so clearly and in such stentorian tones that every syllable was distinctly heard, even above the rattle and roar of the traffic.

"The British workman cannot live without his beer, and the Russian cannot live without his tea," says Rathay Reynolds in "My Russian Year." "In the postoffice the young woman who sells one stamp has probably a glass of tea at her side. In government offices, banks and newspaper offices tea is perpetually going. At railway stations boys come into the train with glasses of tea. At night cabmen and dvorniks buy tea from the men who come around with great samovars swathed in cloths and tumblers stuck into little pockets on their belts. Natchai, for tea, is the Russian for baksheesh. Always, everywhere, golden tea."

It is announced from Nice that Van der Born, the aviator, intends to enter as a competitor for The Daily Mail prize for a flight across the Atlantic. He has chosen a route from Konakey, in French Guinea, to Pernambuco, Brazil, which is somewhat shorter than the more northerly routes hitherto proposed. A new type of hydroaeroplane is being constructed for him at Nice. One of the conditions of The Daily Mail prize for a transatlantic flight is that the aviator must land somewhere in the British Isles. Consequently, Van der Born, if he flew across the ocean on the proposed route, would not be eligible for the prize.

With the signing of an agreement recently between the F. and D. Amusement Company of New York and Frank Mihlon and Inglis M. Uppercu, the cycling promoters of Newark, N. J., who control tracks in New Haven, Boston, and Newark, the cycling sport in this country was further concentrated. The parties to the agreement will together conduct the six-day race at Madison Square Garden for the next three years, and the Cycle Racing Association, owned by Mihlon and Uppercu, has let out the services of the riders under contract to them to race at the tracks in Philadelphia and Brighton Beach. The Cycle Racing Association has under contract the premier cycle riders of this country and Europe. William Wellman represents the F. and D. Company and Floyd A. MacFarland will take care of the interests of the Cycle Racing Association.

"Just once at every performance I regret my skill as a magician," said the conjurer. "That is when the little folk I call up on the stage to assist me in a certain turn are afraid to accept the bona-fide presents I offer them for fear they will go off. At a certain point in the performance I request a girl and a boy of ten or thereabouts to step up. After an interchange of confidences, in which they tell me their first names, and I tell them mine, we get along swimmingly together until they leave the stage, when I present each with an appropriate present. Their gingerly way of handling it tweaks my heart-strings painfully. It would please me to possess those youngsters' trust and confidence, but my success as a magician precludes that. With books and candy held at arm's length they tiptoe down the aisle, and, no doubt, every chocolate is nibbled and every page turned in constant terror lest some new trick be sprung on them."

The United States naval tug, Potomac, which was abandoned by her crew Feb. 14, when she got frozen in the ice while on a mission to rescue two American fishing craft icebound in the Bay of Isles, was brought into St. Johns, N. F., May 2, and safely anchored at Port Saunders. The American Navy Department gave up all hope of saving the tug two months ago, but when the craft reached port it was found that she was undamaged and will prove a valuable prize for the Newfoundlanders who stood by her for three months while she drifted north through the Straits of Belle Isle. After abandoning the vessel the original crew of thirty-three made a perilous trip over the broken ice to the fishing village of Curling, which they reached after a terrible experience lasting three days, and thence made their way to Port aux Basques, and reported their plight to Washington. For ten days the tug was deserted and then some Newfoundland fishermen manned her. Early this month the United States Consular Agent and the engineer of the tug boarded her and she was brought into port.

THE COUNT OF CONNEMARA

—OR—

The Old Pirate's Secret Treasure

By J. P. Richards

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER IV (Continued).

Moya did not follow her friends on the deck of the frigate, but she darted up into the rigging of the brigantine, where she had a full view of the fearful struggle.

She kept her eyes fixed on her father and the unknown youth throughout the fearful scene, and exclamations of admiration burst from her lips as she witnessed the heroic bearing of the young deserter.

"He is a born hero," she would mutter, "and no one ever saw his like before; but father does not notice him yet. Oh, what dreadful work entirely!"

The girl watched on until she saw her father rallying his men for that expected decisive charge, and a cry of dismay escaped from her when she perceived the second frigate looming up alongside in the fog.

She then saw her father falling on the enemy's deck, and she noted the man who had fired the shot, while she cried:

"Father, I'll avenge you!"

Moya's voice could not be heard above the yells of the English crews, but Captain Draco felt the bullet from her pistol piercing his right arm.

The wounded English officer was in the act of rushing at the young deserter and the helpless old pirate at the instant, and he staggered backward into the arms of one of his men, crying:

"Spare the rascals for the rope."

That slight diversion enabled the young deserter to reach the deck of the brigantine with the old pirate.

Moya darted down from the rigging, flinging aside the old hat and discarding the false beard, as she appeared at her father's side, saying:

"I will defend my father! Oh, say that he is not dead, brave lad."

The young stranger was bearing the wounded pirate to the cabin, when he halted to stare at the glowing creature, and to exclaim:

"You here, young lady? For heaven's sake, hasten into the cabin and hide."

Some of the pirates were then engaged in casting off the grappling irons that held the brigantine to the frigate, while the others were mustering at the stern, as if to struggle to the last before resorting to the final refuge against the hangman's hope.

The young adventurer was soon on deck again.

Casting one glance at the English sailors pouring into the brigantine, the youth sprang to the front of the pirates, crying in French:

"Brave men of the Blazer, I am the young wounded stranger your captain befriended, and I will fight for him and his daughter to the death. If we cannot escape, show the English dogs how we can fight. We are in the lion's

mouth, but his jaws are not closed on us yet. Forward for France and the land that bore us."

"Clear the way for the pretty colleen!"

The desperate pirates answered with a ringing cheer, as they dashed at the English—who were attacking their mates at the grappling irons.

So fierce was the onset of the desperate rovers that the English on the bulwarks gave way, the lashings were withdrawn, and the brigantine fell astern of the two frigates.

"Out with the lanterns and up with the sails," yelled a trumpet-toned voice from the cabin window.

It was Captain Sable who appeared there leaning on his daughter.

About a hundred and fifty of the English had then gained a footing on the deck of the pirate ship.

Several of the pirates sprang aloft to obey the order, while the young deserter led the others against their enemies on the deck, yelling:

"The lion's jaws are not closed yet, brave lads, and strike for our brave captain and his fair daughter."

"That young chap is a wonder, Moya," muttered the wounded man; "and he is fit to command a ship."

"A whole fleet, sir, at that. Do rest and leave it to him now."

"I cannot, my dear. A little brandy, and I will fight the ship through the trumpet. Ha! they are at it now like fury."

The old pirate swallowed some brandy and glared out again, but the mist and the darkness obscured his vision.

Seizing his speaking trumpet, he yelled through the open window:

"Into the sea with the English hounds, lads, and man the guns. Captain Sable commands you yet. Fight for life and riches."

"Aye, aye, captain," responded the young deserter, who was heading the pirates with resistless valor. "For life, and gold, and beauty we fight."

"And for hate, you rascal," cried the old pirate, through his trumpet. "Death to the English and all their friends."

"Death to the English and over the plank with them," responded the deserter, who was then far and away the leading spirit on the deck of the pirate ship.

The first and second mates were killed on the deck of the English frigate, and the third officer was lying wounded on the brigantine.

Many of the pirates had noticed the superb bravery of the young stranger who appeared so suddenly among them as a champion and a deliverer in their hour of despair.

With one frigate alone to contend with the pirates were overmatched, and the fall of their old captain was a stunning blow.

The other larger frigate swarmed with men, and her swooping down suddenly in the mist crushed out all hope of escape in the hearts of the pirates.

Then this strange youth appeared among them, with his ringing voice and his flashing eyes, to perform acts of daring such as they had never witnessed.

The pirates were between the jaws of the merciless lion, but this gallant youth extricated them as if by magic.

(To be continued)

ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

A new style of target is in use on the shooting grounds at Aldershot, England. Heads are made to appear and disappear at regular intervals by electricity along the sky line of a range of hills, representing an enemy taking aim and firing. These constitute targets upon which the marksmen practice.

R. W. Jolley of Republic City, Kan., has cut down a walnut tree planted forty years ago which was more than two feet in thickness. The seed was brought from Nemaha County in 1873 by his brother, M. C. Polley, former member of the Legislature from Republic County. Mr. Polley got 250 feet of good timber from the tree, and next Spring intends converting it into furniture.

The transformation that is being wrought in the northern end of Imperial Valley, Cal., as a result of the founding of Niland some nine weeks ago, and the opening up to settlement and development of approximately 100,000 acres in this neighborhood, is now apparent. After traveling through barren desert sands, where no sight of vegetation is to be seen, other than sage and mesquite, these travellers catch sight of alfalfa fields and growing cotton as they approach this "Gate Way City."

John J. Cahill's first and only experience with a clay pipe resulted in his death from cancer, at Findlay, Ohio. Ten years ago Cahill, who was accustomed to a briar pipe, tried a clay one at the urging of a friend. With the stem between his teeth, he was grasping the bowl with his hand, when a noise startled him, and he suddenly jerked the pipe from his mouth. He had not moistened the stem, as is customary, and a piece of flesh from the upper lip was torn off. No attention was paid to the incident until months later, when the sore, which had refused to heal, became extremely painful. Despite efforts of physicians, cancer developed, causing death.

The \$1,000 New Mexico gold and silver filigree table, inlaid with turquoise, garnets, onyx and other stones, exhibited at the World's Fair at Chicago, St. Louis, Omaha and other cities and preserved in the rooms of the Women's Board of Trade, Sante Fe, N. M., was stolen the other night. No trace of the robber has been found despite the use of the penitentiary bloodhounds in the attempt to track the thief. The table, made by the late Capt. Fred Wientge of this city, who was killed in the Spanish-American war, was nationally famous and the world's greatest jewelers pronounced it a marvel of workmanship. Its materials were all gathered in Sante Fe County and it was engraved with historical designs.

Eight weeks ago Mrs. John Kane of Northumberland, Pa., wife of a salesman, took an option on 300 acres of land in what is now the famous gas belt near this city.

Mrs. Kane, like many others, believed there were gas and oil in the belt, and she risked \$50 on an option which covered 300 acres. Two weeks ago a well was sunk on her lots, and a gas gusher producing in the neighborhood of 2,000,000 feet every twenty-four hours was struck. Within a few hours Mrs. Kane was besieged by all land gas men, who offered her big sums of money for an option or part or for the whole thing. Mrs. Kane received more than \$200,000 for the option. She still holds on to the majority portion of the 300 acres.

Walter Rutt, the German cyclist, who holds the world's championship title, will go after the American championship in the sport, and to that end has signed a contract to remain in this country for the entire season. This means that Rutt will not defend his world's title at Copenhagen early in August. He wants to race Frank L. Kramer, American champion for thirteen years, for the honors. Rutt has recovered from his injuries sustained two weeks ago in New Haven, and will return to competition at the local track very soon. Originally Rutt's contract called for his return to Germany on June 15. Rutt may remain in the country long enough to engage in the six-day cycle race in New York next December.

An enterprising American firm, knowing the fondness for eggs and chickens which lurks in the heart of every denizen of far Cathay, recently sent a shipment of incubators to China and thought to sell them like hot cakes. Instead, the henless hatchers were a drug on the market at Amoy, the spot chosen to break in with the Yankee goods. And a little inquiry brought forth the reason—John Chinaman has his own peculiar way of hatching eggs without hens or incubators, and an unusually large percentage of his eggs produce bright and husky chicks. He first takes a quantity of unhusked rice and roasts it, cooling it down by fanning or by allowing the wind to blow through until it is luke-warm. He then spreads a three-inch layer of the rice in a wooden tub and places about 100 eggs thereon; another layer of rice, this second and subsequent layers being but two inches in thickness, is spread over the eggs. Each tub will have six layers of rice and five layers of eggs, so that there will be 500 eggs in each tub. The rice is heated again once every twenty-four hours, the eggs being taken out at such times. When the eggs are again put in the rice the bottom layer is placed on top and each of the other layers one row lower down, while the eggs previously in the center of the tub are placed at the edge. The entire tub is covered with a cotton mattress. The chicks and ducklings are produced in twenty to thirty days, and are quite as lively and able to scratch as if they had been mothered by a real hen, or at least one of those new-fangled machines made in Ohio, U. S. A.

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FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher

168 West 23d Street

New York

Out of a box car of beer that arrived at Vancouver, B. C., May 30, there walked the shadow of a once robust tomat. Pussy's ribs were showing and he was so weak he could hardly move toward a bowl of milk that kind-hearted customs officials at the Canadian Pacific wharf quickly provided for him. The car was sealed in Milwaukee on April 25 and the big cat had no grub since. He will recover.

A burglar attempting to break into the home of Thomas J. Dixon, an attorney, of Denver, Col., was frightened away the other night at the "point" of a hairbrush. Dixon detected the burglar cutting a screen on a window of his home. Seizing a silver mounted hairbrush he pointed at the man. "Throw up your hands," commanded Dixon. The burglar saw the glint of the silver back and quickly held his hands above his head. Dixon then called to his wife to telephone for the police. Before the officers arrived the burglar discovered Dixon's ruse. He scrambled over a high board fence and disappeared.

Tom E. Mason, a fur trapper, has come to Edmonton, Alberta, for medical treatment, following a fierce fight with a golden eagle, which clawed and pecked his face, neck and left shoulder and arm. He killed the bird, which had a spread of wings of eight feet two inches from tip to tip. "I was attracted to a trap," Mason said, "by

a strange noise, and as I got closer I saw a huge golden eagle held by one foot. My first thought was to release the bird, not thinking that it would venture an attack; but that is where I was fooled. I was quickly made aware of the fact when I was sprawled upon my back with the eagle and the trap on top of me."

David E. Cummings, an enlisted man of the Navy, has successfully passed the entrance examinations for entrance to the Naval Academy and will become a midshipman June 10 when he reports for the required physical examination. He was born at Prescott, Ariz., Jan. 18, 1895, but his father at present lives at Little Rock, Ark. Mr. Cummings enlisted in the Navy at St. Louis, Mo., Nov. 19, 1913, as landsman or yeoman, he having had previous training as stenographer. He was immediately sent to the School for Yeomen at Newport, R. I., and on Feb. 16, 1914, received a nomination as midshipman to the Naval Academy from Hon. W. S. Goodwin, of the 7th Arkansas District. Having received this appointment he was transferred from the Yeoman School to the Reina Mercedes, the station ship at the Naval Academy, in order that he might pursue his studies to enable him to pass the examination. The Secretary of the Navy has authorized his discharge as an enlisted man on June 9. On June 10 he will take the required physical examination and be sworn in as a midshipman.

THE BOY WHO DID IT

—OR—

ALL FOR THE GOOD OF THE TOWN

By William Wade

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER I (Continued).

"Why, Rod, I don't see how I can go to-night," replied the girl, in the same low tone. "Mother is feeling particularly nervous, and I should not want to leave her alone."

Rod felt hurt, although he tried not to show it, for he felt sure that Annie had an inkling of what was in his mind.

"I had a plan I wanted to talk over with you," he said. "Of course, I don't propose to remain idle. That isn't my style. I won't go to the Landing and desert the old town, I have too much pride for that, but——"

"Oh! oh!" screamed the widow from the window. "Oh, my heart!"

Poor woman! She had been afflicted for years with an incurable complaint.

The next Rod and Annie knew she was stretched upon the floor, unconscious, and if Rod's evening had not been spoiled before it certainly was now.

They had got her on the bed, and while Annie attended to her, Rod flew on his wheel for the doctor.

When he returned the widow was much better; and seeing that he was only in the way the boy started for home.

Poor Rod!

He had anticipated a delightful evening's love-making among the roses.

Instead of that he had run right up against trouble, and if the boy had only known it there was worse to come.

The worst setback which Bowmanville had ever had was about to strike the dying town.

CHAPTER II.

IN THE OLD WELL.

Rod Bowman was an orphan, and had been so since three years of age.

Nothing very serious about that for a good, smart fellow like our hero. Of course, we merely mention the fact, for it is necessary to fully introduce the boy, and to make his situation in Bowmanville perfectly plain.

But speaking in another sense, just then Rod had no situation and there seemed little chance of getting one unless he joined in the general stampede to the "Landing," to which people were removing every day.

It was rather gloomy to ride through the streets of Bowmanville and read the signs on the closed dwellings and stores. "For Sale!" "To Let!" "For Sale or Exchange!"

It was almost every other house.

One storekeeper had painted on a board, which he had nailed across the closed shutters:

"For sale—to let! I'll swap it for cats and dogs! Anything to get rid of it. Come down to the Landing and see me. No reasonable offer refused."

It made Rod fairly sick to see the town in which his dead father had taken so much pride going to wreck and ruin in this way.

Presently Rod came to his own house, which was one of the largest in town.

This was partly closed up, too.

Rod could not do otherwise. He was penniless; there was a heavy mortgage on the place, which the bank down at the Landing would have foreclosed long ago if it had been of any use, but as the property was almost valueless, Rod was allowed to remain in the house as a sort of tenant at will.

Putting his wheel in the big hall, Rod lit a lamp and turned to look around at the knob.

If there had been a card with the word "out" upon it, he would have left the door open; but as there wasn't, he locked it, knowing that his chum, Charley Cook, was in bed.

Charley was another survival of the wreck, so to speak.

Like Rod, his parents were dead and of late he had been working at Jaggers' grocery. Next week he was off for the Landing to follow the fortunes of his firm.

Hurrying upstairs, Rod entered a large and well-furnished chamber where he saw Charley lying on the bed, sound asleep, as he thought, but when he put the lamp on the bureau, the boy suddenly sprang up with a wild scream.

"Oh, Rod! Is that you?" he cried. "Oh, by gracious! Oh! oh! Thunder! Then it was all a dream!"

"What in the world is the matter with you, Charley?" exclaimed Rod. "Another case of nightmare, old man?"

"I suppose it is," panted Charley. "Dear me! Don't put the light out yet. I dreamed—I dreamed—oh, I'm all mixed up."

"What did you dream, Charley? Tell a fellow and it will relieve your mind," said Rod, beginning to undress.

"Why, I dreamed that I was standing on the bluff and I saw an immense black giant come right down out of the sky," replied Charley, who was always a very susceptible fellow and full of queer ideas. "He had a big stone in his hand and he threw it at the town and knocked all the houses down, and, oh, Rod, what was that?"

A sharp clap of thunder suddenly broke and the whole house shook.

"Strange," cried Rod. "I noticed it was growing rather dark in the west, but I didn't think the storm was coming so soon. I'm going out to see what's going on."

"So am I!" said Charley, jumping out of bed and pulling on his clothes. "I feel as nervous as an old cat. I tell you, something is going to happen sure!"

Rod laughed, but he ran downstairs in the dark and was out in the road in a moment.

It was excessively hot, and there was a certain closeness about the atmosphere which made the heat even harder to bear.

(To be continued)

INTERESTING TOPICS

TOUGH "OLD BOYS."

The ranks of those who took part in any military campaign fifty years ago are rapidly thinning. A correspondent of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, however, calls attention to the extraordinary longevity that distinguishes the veterans of the Russian army.

An event that took place during the centennial celebration of the "war of the fatherland," as the campaign against Napoleon in 1812 is called, aroused wide interest. The committee that was arranging the festivities in Moscow conceived the strange notion of issuing an invitation to the veterans of this war of a hundred years ago. Foreigners considered it a pretty and sentimental bit of formality. To their astonishment, however, there proved to be as much reason as poetry behind it, for twenty-six survivors of that terrible winter of 1812 responded to the call.

This longevity is all the more remarkable in view of the rigor of the climate and the hardships to which these old soldiers are doubtless exposed in their peasant homes. Furthermore, in the remote districts from which most of the veterans came there is a conspicuous lack of progress in medicine and hygiene.

Naturally, these aged men, crippled and failing, could take no part in the festivities. Their mere presence, however, was enough to make the occasion remarkable.

The youngest of the "old boys" was 117 years of age; the oldest was 126 years old. He was born in 1786, before George Washington was elected president of the United States! It is almost incredible that one man's life should span such a space of years.

SCIENCE AND THE BURGLAR.

Science, while aiding mankind in all sorts of beneficent ways, is at the same time aiding the cracksman to pursue his nefarious work with much more neatness and dispatch and with less danger to himself than ever before. The modern burglar now spurns the clumsy outfit of crowbar, jimmies and skeleton keys. He knows a trick worth a dozen of those. He carries a few ounces of nitroglycerin, a cylinder or two of oxygen and acetylene and a blowpipe. With these easily concealed tools he can force his way through the toughest steel.

The blowpipe is the deadly enemy which the safe manufacturer is now trying, with the aid of science, to circumvent. Under the intense heat that it generates the strongest steel crumples up like paper. A circle some two feet in diameter can be cut through metal an inch thick in a few minutes.

Deadly forces must be handled with care and an exact knowledge of the power of which they are capable. It is not for the reckless or the bungler to toy with the blowpipe or nitroglycerin. So Raffles sets to work to acquire a scientific knowledge and skill of manipulation that if put to some legitimate use might open up to him an honorable career.

Quite recently a safe-breaker whose successful career was suddenly halted by the law, fairly amazed expert scientists by the completeness of his library, which comprised a valuable collection of books in French and German written by scientists for presentation to technical societies. He made a specialty of the subject of the force of the blowpipe on metals. He admitted that he had spent three years in this study. A laboratory adjoining his library was small and compact.

No sooner does the scientist discover some tremendous force than he must set to work to counteract that force in the hands of the criminal. It is said that recent experiments have produced a steel that will even withstand the blast of the blowpipe.

MEXICO'S MINERAL WEALTH.

Mexico produces one-third of the world's silver, a considerable percentage of its gold, one-ninth of its lead and one-twentieth of its copper. The country's mineral production, exclusive of iron, coal and petroleum, amounted to \$158,000,000 in 1910. The famous iron mountain at Durango is estimated to contain 600,000,000 tons of iron ore, which is worth seven times the value of all the gold and silver mined in Mexico in two centuries. The Santa Maria graphite mines are the largest and most important in the western world.

The region around the Gulf of Mexico is very rich in petroleum. One company at Poteri del Llano struck a gusher which flowed 100,000 barrels of oil a day.

The drawn-work of the Mexican Indian is justly famed throughout the world and deserves to rank with the finest of Spanish and Italian laces. The Indians make all sorts of small objects to attract the centavos of the tourist. The little dolls of Cuernavaca, a half-inch tall and dressed in finely embroidered raiment, are the admiration of every one who sees them. The small clay animals, perfectly fashioned and ranging from the peaceful dog to the charging bull and the bucking mule, would do credit to the genius of many a sculptor whose name figures in the art publications of the world. But perhaps the most wonderful of all are the tiny dressed fleas which may be bought in Mexico City. Another wonderful work of the Indians is the making of feather pictures from the plumage of humming birds.

The Indians of Mexico eat many curious foods. One of the most remarkable of these is made of the eggs of a species of marsh fly. This fly deposits its eggs in incredible quantities upon flags and rushes. The eggs are gathered and made into cakes which are sold in the markets. The Indians call the eggs waterwheat. They resemble fine fish roe and when mixed with cornmeal and fowl eggs form a staple article of diet particularly during Lent. The insects themselves, which are about the size of the house-fly, are captured, pounded into a paste, boiled in corn husks in much the same fashion as tamales, and in this form are eaten.

A FEW GOOD ITEMS

CALIFORNIA GRAPES.

Last year the Golden State produced a measly 100,000 gallons of the unfermented juice of the grape as against 42,000,000 gallons of wine and 1,524,245 gallons of brandy.

No State can compare with California in the acreage and money devoted to the raising of grapes. There are 330,000 acres in vines, representing a valuation of \$66,000,000. Packing houses and the 700 wineries in the State give enough additional valuation to bring the total money invested to \$150,000,000.

In 1913 California consumed about 1,000 carloads of her own luscious table grapes and shipped 6,363 carloads to other States, each carload weighing 26,000 pounds. In other words, California grape raisers sold 191,436,000 pounds of grapes to be eaten last season, bringing \$9,202,750.

The total dry wine production was 25,000,000 gallons, requiring 180,000 tons of grapes. For sweet wines another 212,000 tons of grapes were used to make the 17,000,000 gallons produced. For the brandy, 51,000 tons of grapes were pressed. The wines and brandies produced were sold for \$15,000,000.

About ninety per cent of all grape products is sold outside the State. The three items, grapes, wines and raisins brought \$30,000,000 for 1913. Of this amount \$27,000,000 was money coming into California from other States to be added to the wealth of its people, all derived from the 1,800,000,000 pounds of grapes harvested—900,000 tons!

BURNED THEIR SCHOOL.

Federal Judge Maurice T. Dooling, of San Francisco, has taken the tangle out of many knotty problems in his career on the bench, but, according to his own admission, he now has run "up against a stone wall."

Three fifteen-year-old Indian boys of the Round Valley reservation in Mendocino County have pleaded guilty to burning down a \$1,000 Government school. The penalty is twenty years in prison and a \$5,000 fine.

Developments in court showed that the youngsters were lashed over their backs as a punishment for running away from school to roam the wilds as their ancestors did. Clerk Omar Bates of the reservation administered the lashings, according to the boys, after he had rounded them up. In a spirit of revenge and to insure their freedom from lessons the lads applied the torch to their school, reducing it to ashes.

Judge Dooling said he would have to punish the defendants as a deterrent to other Indian lads who might plan a long school vacation by similar methods. He was inclined to sentence them to the Alameda County jail for a while. The little fellows seemed highly pleased over this prospect, causing the Court to ask the reason of the glee.

The prisoners had already spent several weeks in that jail awaiting the present proceedings. In unison they told the Judge that they liked the jail very much—much better than school and the reservation—even if they could not fish and hunt there.

After District-Attorney Preston remarked that the jail ought to be investigated if it were such a pleasant place to reside, the Court said:

"Well, it looks like I'm up against a stone wall. Jail sentences will not punish these boys. They will relish that."

ANDREE'S BALLOON FOUND IN SIBERIA?

What is believed to be the remains of the balloon in which Prof. Salomon August Andree ascended from Dane's Island, near Spitzbergen, July 11, 1897, in an attempt to reach the North Pole, have been found in a forest in Eastern Siberia, according to a telegram received at the Swedish Foreign Ministry, Stockholm, Sweden, May 27, from Yakutsk. A thorough investigation of the reported discovery has been ordered by the Government.

Although traces of his balloon have been reported discovered at various places from time to time and although it has been reported three times that his body had been found (one report said on the coast of Labrador), nothing has ever been positively established as to what actually happened to the expedition or what became of the balloon.

Andree, with two companions, Dr. Strindberg and Fraenkel, started from Dane's Island in the hope that trade winds would waft him to the North Pole in a week, carry him over the Pole, and land him safely in North America.

Five buoys from the balloon have been picked up. The first found in Norway in June, 1899, contained a note from Andree and was thrown out eight hours after his departure. The "North Pole Buoy," to be dropped when the Pole was passed, was found empty off King Charles Island in September, 1899. A third buoy, also empty, was found on the west coast of Iceland in July, 1900, and another was reported from Norway a month later. In September, 1912, a buoy marked, "Andree's North Pole Expedition, 1896; No. 10 Buoy," was picked up by the Norwegian steamer Beta, which arrived at Tromsø from Spitzbergen.

Many search expeditions, many equipped at great expense, have returned unsuccessful. In January, 1910, despatches from Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, said that Bishop Pascal announced that he had received letters from a missionary telling of the supposed finding of Andree's balloon by Esquimaux near Reindeer Lake in the Arctic Circle, 900 miles north of Prince Albert. The Esquimaux, it was said, still were using the ropes and balloon material in padding their canoes and fixing their tents.

PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, JUNE 24, 1914.

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GOOD CURRENT NEWS ARTICLES

Torn and bleeding from a desperate battle with a big black cat, Emma Wyley, sixteen, of Oakland, Cal., was taken to the Receiving Hospital to have her wounds dressed. Miss Wyley is a squab raiser. She heard a noise in her pigeon houses and went out to investigate. When she opened the door she saw a black cat, so big that she thought at first that it must be a wildcat, killing pigeons. The animal sprang upon her, and for five minutes she battled with it in the darkness before she was able to throw it off and flee to the house.

A curious magic wand has been developed in France. It is worked by the action of a concealed magnet, so that a mouse or other small animal appears to run up and down the wand in a mysterious way. The wand is a square tube of light wood covered with silk, and the animal is of celluloid and has a small piece of iron on the bottom. Inside the rod is a small lead weight on an endless cord, and when the wand is turned up the weight falls gradually and draws along a small magnet, also fixed on the cord and just below the surface. When the rod is inclined the rat climbs up.

Two thousand quarts of beets and six hundred quarts of piccalili have been sold by Mrs. Will Robins to the Dodge City, Kan., Wholesale Grocery Company, during the past few weeks—by-products of the Robins' truck farm, south of the river. Mrs. Robins puts up these products in pint glass jars, attractively labeled, with words something as follows: "Fancy Home-made piccalili, no preservatives used. No factory-made product. Put up by Mrs. Will Robins, Cimarron, Kan." Mrs. Robins also had a contract with the Harvey eating house to furnish them with onions during the season just past. Her garden products are as valuable as the wheat crop on the average farm, and more certain.

While it has not been suggested that the British Admiralty follow the example of Secretary Daniels and prohibit the use of wines and liquors in the navy, a movement is afoot to induce the men to give up drink. Speaking of this movement, Admiral Sir G. King-Hall said that tem-

perance in the navy is making progress all along the line, but there is still room for much improvement. He condemns the practice of giving out grog and said 5 per cent. of the men would give it up if some small addition to their pay were substituted. He hopes some First Lord of the future will take up the matter with wisdom and boldness. It would mean adding only another \$300,000 to the pay of the men to bring about the reform which would lead to an increase in efficiency all around. In the Indian army the progress of temperance is remarkable. According to officers back from India, about 50 per cent. of the British soldiers there are total abstainers.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES

Frugal Aunt—Well, Tommy, haven't you anything to say after eating a nice dinner like that? Tommy—Yes'm. I hain't had half enough.

Physician—Don't be downcast; you're not dead yet. Patient—That's what bothers me. If I were dead I shouldn't have to trouble myself about your bill.

"I see that those New York society women have discovered a method of hiding their blushes." "What is it?" "They paint them over."

"Do you think, then, that men descended from chimpanzees?" asked Willie Wishington. "Some did," answered Miss Cayenne, "and some merely remained stationary."

Nodd—How is your orange grove in Florida getting on? Todd—First rate, old man. Why, in a couple of years I expect to have enough oranges to supply my table.

Ernie—I saw you automobiling with Fred yesterday. You looked as though your heart was in your mouth. Ida—No wonder. The automobile was going sixty miles an hour, and Fred was proposing at the same time.

"Don't you think it is wrong for your husband to bet on horse races?" said the prudent woman. "It is very frequently," answered young Mrs. Torkins. "The trouble is that you can't tell when until after the race is run, and then it's too late."

"This," said the lecturer, "is a picture of the *Ipiscus masidonian thermomonoclytus*, an animal that has been extinct for over 4,000 years." "You're wrong there," said a man at the end of the room. "There's two o' thim with ivery bottle of Casey's whiskey."

Overheard in Cambridge Hospital, Aldershot, when the sick were being examined. Military Doctor (to Private Jonas, of the Buffs)—Well, my man, what's the matter with you? Private Jonas—Pains in the back, sir. Doctor (handing him a few pills)—Take one of these a quarter of an hour before you feel the pain coming on.

THE NEWS IN SHORT ARTICLES

A CYCLE RAILWAY CAR.

Under the mysterious title the "local autocar velo," a new form of rail wagon has appeared this summer on French country railroads, whose service hitherto had been deplorably slow and undependable.

The invention consists of a light car, twenty feet long and fitted on each side with ten bicycle seats, with pedals, cranks, and chains below, the motive power being exercised by the travelers themselves.

Experiments show that a speed of twenty miles an hour can easily be attained, while the price charged is only a quarter of the usual rate. This is sure to appeal to thrifty French tourists.

If the innovation be successful, even the main lines purpose to allow full-sized trains thus equipped to leave Paris during the holiday period.

FINED FOR KEEPING BEES.

Because a hive of bees persisted in sending forth a warring brigade much to the discomfiture of citizens of Banquo, Wayne township, Huntington County, Ind., George Spaulding, of that village, was arrested for maintaining a nuisance. He was fined \$16.51. The bees had inserted their stingers into the anatomy of several persons and passing horses, and "after due deliberation and careful consideration of the evidence," George Washington Stults ruled that the continued presence of the bees and hive along the highway at Spaulding's home surely was some nuisance.

Spaulding pleaded that he could not prevent his neighbors from raising flowering plants which attracted the bees, and he didn't wish to practice cruelty to animals on the bees by clipping their wings to keep them from flying over the boundary fences. Spaulding paid his fine and has since moved his hive to the middle of his small farm.

MUCH GAME IN MICHIGAN.

According to J. H. McGillivray, Deputy State Forest Warden, there are 48,000 deer in Michigan—44,000 in the upper peninsula and 4,000 in the northern part of the area south of the Straits of Mackinac.

Mr. McGillivray says there are known to be 34 moose in the State. He estimates the number of wild animals as follows: Rabbits, 2,500,000; raccoons, 50,000; mink, 70,000; foxes, 100,000; polecats, 170,000; otters, 18,000; beavers, 8,000; bears, 5,000; partridges, 500,000.

He suggests that hunting in the southern peninsula be prohibited for five years, and that at the close of that period the killing of deer be restricted to those with moose.

It is the purpose of the State Game and Forestry Warden's Department to introduce the ringed-neck pheasant in Michigan. This bird was loosed in New York several

years ago for the first time, and it has now so multiplied that the Legislature contemplates an open season for it. The pheasant will be established in Michigan in the game refuges, provision for the institution of which was made by the last Legislature. Private individuals have donated considerable money and much land for the establishment of breeding places.

MIKADO'S SUBJECTS ARE HATED IN AUSTRALIA.

The Japanese Government has become so seriously concerned over the anti-Japanese spirit cultivated in Australia, New Zealand and Canada, that missions have been sent to England and the Dominions named to counteract this feeling.

In Australia the antagonism against Asiatic immigration is even more bitter than in New Zealand, Canada, or the Western States of America. It is believed that the Japanese have designs on Australia. It is for this, and for no other reason, that conscription has been introduced into the Dominion, and the start has been made in building a navy.

Among the stories current in Australia is one that a map of that country is hung up in every schoolroom in Japan, to which the attention of the pupils is directed as being that of a land which should form a part of the Japanese Empire. The Japanese deny this, and say the only justification for the invention is the cry of "To the South Seas," which is often heard in Japan, but which means nothing more than a movement of commercial expansion and has no political significance.

The antagonism of which the Japanese complain is not confined to Australians and New Zealanders. Englishmen visiting those Dominions are infected with it. Gen. Sir Ian Hamilton, Inspector General of the Oversea Forces, who is paying an official visit to the Antipodes, referred to it in a speech at Wellington, New Zealand. Answering the question why extraordinary precautions were being taken in Australia and New Zealand, he said it was because of the shortening of distances caused by the advent of electricity and the aeroplane and of high explosives.

"The Pacific," he said, "is the meeting-ground not of nations, but of continents, where it may be decided whether Asiatics or Europeans should guide the destinies of the world."

Other reasons no less obvious are under the surface. In the Malay States a fine people is going down before cheap coolie labor, and China showed signs of breaking up. These were illustrations of the change-evolving chaos, resembling the time of the French revolution. Foreigners who live on rice and monopolize business are invading British countries. New Zealand is very close to the danger zone, and New Zealand is no less eager, ready and willing to help her big sister.

CHANGING MONEY TRICK BOX.



With this trick box you can make money change, from a penny into a dime or vice versa. Also make dimes appear and disappear at your command. Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid.

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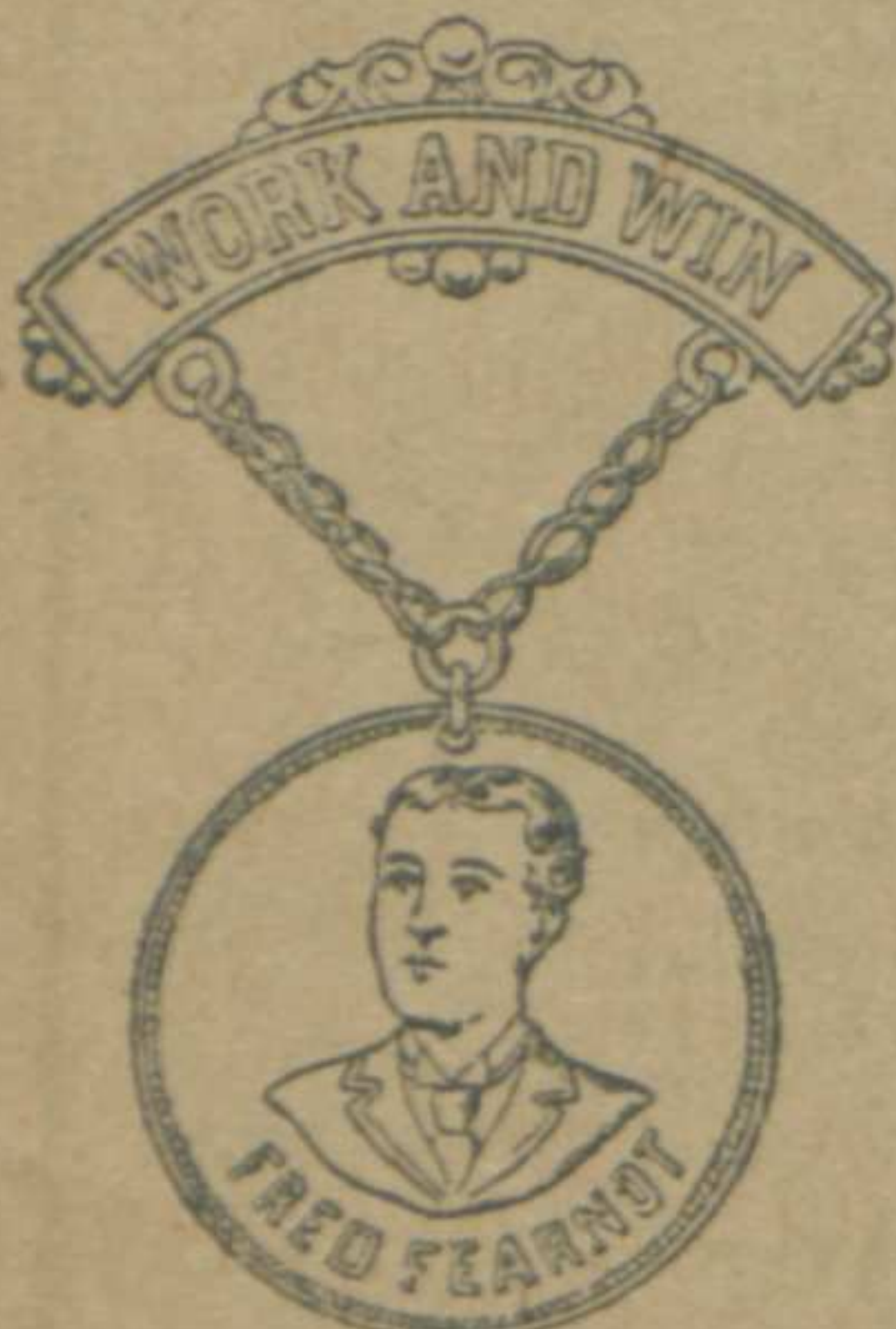
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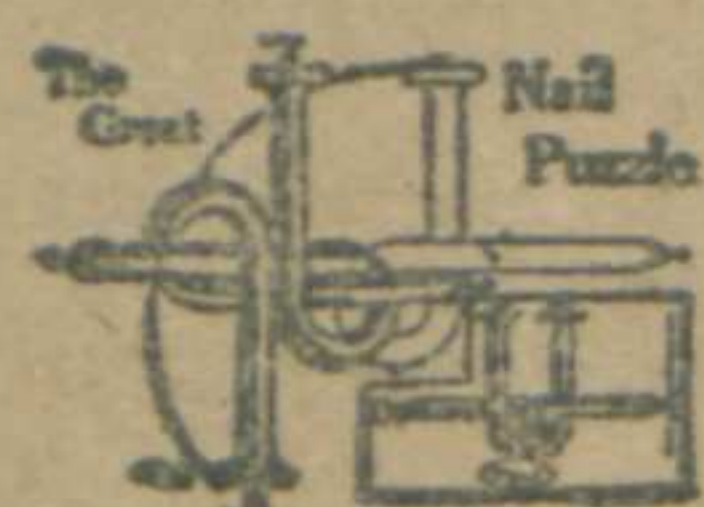
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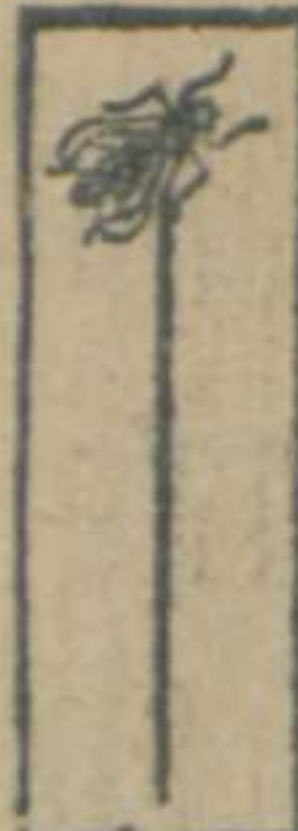
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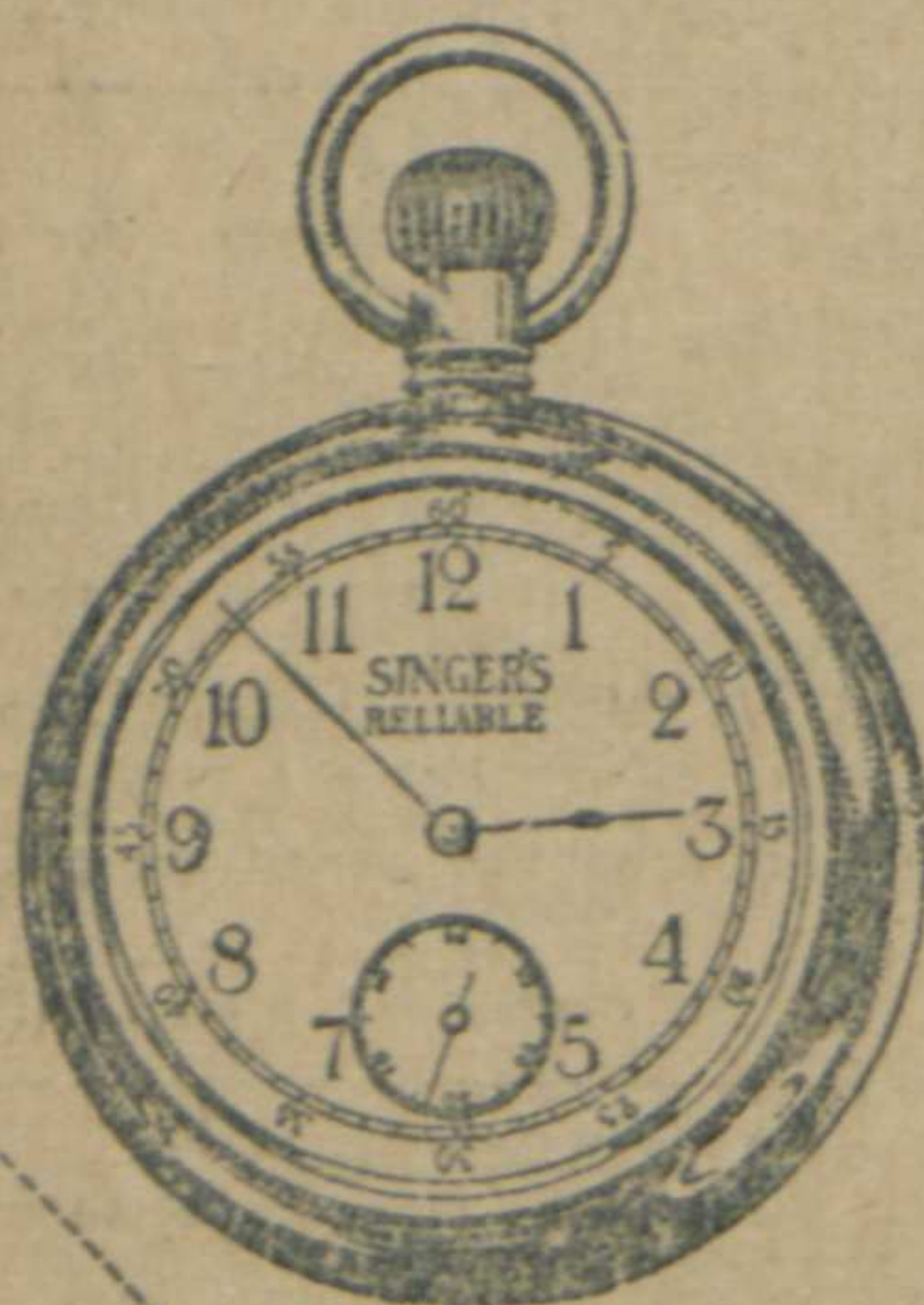


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